

NORTHWEST + CENTRAL VT PREVENTION NETWORK

MEETING NOTES

July 7th, 2026

10:00 – 11:30am

Meeting Goal

Providing an opportunity for people and organizations across Northwest and Central Vermont to come together to share information, make connections, and explore opportunities related to prevention of substance misuse and promoting wellbeing in our communities.

Welcome & Agenda Overview

Agenda:

Welcome/Intros

Prevention Partner Updates

Backbone Updates

Flavors Hook Kids Campaign Update: Catherine Johnston, Field Director

Group Discussion

Wrap up/Next Steps

Prevention Partner Updates

Rebecca Majoya (Spectrum Mentoring): hosting the Gone Guys film in Swanton and St Albans, July 15th and July 21st respectively (see full information in Prevention Network Email)

Sarah DeBouter (MENTOR Vermont): Additionally, there will be a mentoring mindset trainings in the weeks following these Gone Guys screenings for those communities to offer if not solutions, a way of offering greater support

Lisa Grefe: just launched nonprofit management certification program, [2026 Nonprofit Management Certificate | Common Good Vermont](#), email lisa@commongoodvt.org with any questions

James Downes (NEHIDTA): Overdose Response Strategy puts on a webinar every other month, sign up here <https://orsprogram.org/tat-webinars>

Stephen Hayes (VDH): Chittenden Suicide Prevention Coalition, had two meetings so far, crafting some objectives and logistics, want to emphasize that it's a very inclusive group, if interested, next meeting is next Wednesday, email Stephen.hayes@vermont.gov

Nick Tatakis (Prevention Consultant, Burlington): Health Department released the first part of the 2024 social autopsy report. Rest of 2024 will be released piecemeal to break it up into a series of



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data briefs to make it more accessible. Link here: [Data and Reports | Vermont Department of Health](#)

Amy Brewer (FGI Tobacco Prevention Coalition): In case anyone wants to join in a Butt Litter Clean Up: [Franklin Grand Isle Tobacco Prevention Coalition - Northwestern Medical Center](#)

Backbone Updates

Beth Whitlock joined in January as the Operations Manager; in that time she's done a lot of work and done it very well. She has been promoted to the Director of Prevention & Housing Initiatives. She will be taking care of LPO, RPP and school-based funding!

Megan Bridges is stepping away from her prevention role to focus on her work with Bone Builders, partner engagement, and the AmeriCorps Seniors grant. Her leadership is needed there, and we're really excited for her.

Hilary Denton has stepped away from her role as the Prevention Consultant in the Barre Health District. She will be taking the summer off to spend with her family, and she will return in the fall as Director of Youth and Family Services at the Turning Point Center of Central Vermont.

Flavors Hook Kids Campaign Update

Presentation is included in the follow up

What's next? Share your ideas:

Rebecca Majoya: training our mentors. Often mentors don't know what to do. They're like "it's okay cause it's better than cigarettes", can talk to them but don't have the information you do.

Amy Brewer: Our local coalitions can do that!!! Sign me up!

Matt Wolf: similar to Rebecca, train folks on how to talk to young people, lots coming up in teen centers, kids showing substance use behaviors with energy drinks, talked about alternatives. Training people in how to respond and giving alternatives for kids so they have something else to do.

Stephen Hayes: Not necessarily a next step, but something our school-based partners are sharing back is how prevalent non-vape nicotine products, pouches in particular, are. It seems there is more collective awareness in the public about vaping than the pouches/perceptions of nicotine more broadly



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Mariah Flynn: of the kids we have involved in youth leadership and policy work, they understand the flavors issue the best, and it's the biggest concern for them. Have most capacity for that

Amy Brewer: echoing that. When I give presentations and ask the young people what q they have, they want to know why flavors are still legal, and I don't have a good answer for them. When the governor vetoed, he talked about flavors in other things as well. Talk about the role of flavors in other substances as well and discuss how they appeal to people.

Amy Brewer: would be interesting to ask the governor's office about it. We know they have high nicotine levels which are limited in other countries, there's a conversation to be had.

Matt Wolf: Oooh! That's a good one Amy! Could we have nicotine levels limited in VT?

Michele Bessette: just thinking that maybe students could make their own PSAs around flavors. Could be an activity for students to work on.

Catherine Johnston: Lamoille has experience doing that! They show the PSAs in the movie theater

Mariah Flynn: would be good to explore nicotine level caps

Matt Wolf: thinking about governor's office and wondering what they'd be willing to be on board with. Regardless of him, something we should try for.

Did people buy in other states: questions?

Adrienne Lueders-Dumont: I am someone who never buys things I consume online except for local food, so I am always confused what is legal to buy online and how that works. I know confirming age and ID is a thing. What are Vermont's laws? Also national shipping?

Catherine Johnston: only tobacco wholesalers can buy online and bring products into the state. Retailers cannot buy tobacco online.

Amy Brewer: no vapes, cigarettes, or pouches can be bought online. Except for wholesalers. Doesn't matter if you're 16 or 50. AG's office is working to enforce that. There are exceptions with pipes and something else, but the things that young people generally consume cannot be bought online.

[Draft Bill Template](#) "Sec. 2. 7 V.S.A. § 1010(b) is amended to read: (b) No person shall cause cigarettes, roll-your-own tobacco, little cigars, or snuff, tobacco substitutes, substances containing nicotine or otherwise intended for use with a tobacco substitute, or tobacco



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paraphernalia, ordered or purchased by mail or through a computer network, telephonic network, or other electronic network, to be shipped to anyone other than a licensed wholesale dealer or retail dealer in this State."

Rebecca Majoya: are we going to get a copy of these slides? Would like to put some in mentor trainings

S.18 Flavors Bill. Successful legislative campaign that was passed but vetoed by governor. Why would we ban flavored tobacco products if we have flavored alcohol and cannabis products?

Potential to increase purchasing across borders or online. Have not been any statistically significant changes in sales in neighboring states

Questions:

Mariah Flynn: made a lot more progress than we had before, celebrate the momentum and support we got

Amy Brewer: in addition to the things he said, talking about one substance and not the others is hard.

Catherine Johnston: emphasize that all the work done on flavors helped S.198 pass

Group Discussion

Beth Whitlock: thank you for presentation! I've also seen lots of people that are in their late 20s and early 30s who have started vaping when they've never used nicotine before. How do we approach "you're 30 and just started vaping?"

Catherine Johnston: I know we have this emphasis on kids and it's super important, and there's a lot to talk about in terms of equity.

Beth Whitlock: if kids are around adults who are around vaping, then they're more likely to do it, so focusing a little more on the adult population would be universal prevention.

Mariah Flynn: what's the conversation like in different areas? Talking to legislators about communities that are disproportionately affected. Conversation with 9th grade parents because they were seeing higher rates of use at the end of the school year. People who showed up were affluent and had resources, but their kids are struggling. Good reminder that the industry is so intense in their marketing to kids that all young people are affected. Another thing is getting



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colleges involved. Years ago, when we were having cannabis conversations and tobacco issues, having college campuses be partners and strong advocates helped a lot

Catherine Johnston: Tom Fontana at UVM is a strong advocate. When he talks to kids about alcohol, they talk about bingeing. When he talks to kids about cannabis, they talk about frequency of use. When he talks to kids about tobacco and nicotine, they talk about how much they wish they had never touched it.

Amy Brewer: one of the most promising data points out there is the BRFSS for young adults. 88% of those who use nicotine wish they could quit. Messaging needs to be around the role of stress and anxiety in using nicotine to help. Hearing people pick up nicotine to get better sports outcomes and focus better. It's temporary and it comes with great cost physically and financially

Catherine Johnston: use of products increases stress and anxiety. You wouldn't have the stress and anxiety if you weren't addicted. Need to know the feelings of withdrawal vs stress.

Matt Wolf: also asking them to do long term thinking, they're more living in the moment. Again, replacement behaviors. Why would you start vaping at 25-30 unless it was "helping" you. What are things you can replace it with?

Mariah Flynn: I know the conversation is around flavors, but there seems to have been success with throwing everything you want into a bill, could add limiting the amount of nicotine in a product. Probably more strategy than that but is there potential to go anywhere?

Catherine Johnston: how to convene the community, brainstorm, and then test what is likely to succeed and what we can risk. Lots of people are talking about zoning around schools, not allowing tobacco/smoking within distance, banning smoking in public spaces like parks. Lots of approaches and focuses. Good idea to craft a comprehensive bill. Would like to discuss w community at large.

Adrienne Lueders-Dumont: And for the age group Beth was talking about, some people's recovery journey from one substance or behavior may morph into a difference substance with less immediate health risks or behaviors

Wrap up/Next Steps

Next month's meeting will be August 13th, 10:00-11:30am

