



City of Bristol

PRESS RELEASE

Phone: 860.584.6250

Fax: 860.584.3835

Office of the Mayor
111 North Main Street
Bristol, CT 06010

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BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL ENDORSES RECOVERY FRIENDLY COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

BRISTOL -- At their regular meeting Tuesday night, the City Council voted unanimously to establish the City of Bristol as a "Recovery Friendly Community," as defined by the Connecticut Alcohol and Drug Policy Council. The designation is for those communities which are interested in supporting residents who are in recovery from substance abuse disorders.

"This is a project that the city's Opioid Task Force has been reviewing for a few months," said Mayor Ellen Zoppo-Sassu. "There are several criteria that a community should meet in order to be considered a 'Recovery Friendly' community."

According to a checklist provided by the state Alcohol and Drug Policy Council, in order for communities to be designated as 'recovery friendly,' they must: raise awareness of substance use conditions; promote health and recovery by reducing stigma and discrimination; and build or improve the environmental factors necessary for "recoverees" to flourish.

"Bristol already meets most of this criteria, and we are always trying to do more to make our community safer and healthier," said the Mayor. "From the Park Department to Police and Fire, all of the city departments are buying-in to the concept that we need to promote awareness of substance use condition and offer programs that help people successfully navigate recovery, and then stay in recovery."

The Youth & Community Services Department also sponsors the Best-4-Bristol group which is a peer group of young people encouraging other young people to avoid using drugs, vaping, and other substance abuse issues. A survey taken by the Best-4-Bristol Coalition in 2016 showed that when looking at State and National youth substance use rates, Bristol is significantly lower around alcohol, cigarettes, and RX drug use. However, Bristol youth use of Marijuana is similar to the national use rate. "In 2016, 10% of Bristol Youth reported using marijuana within the last 30 days, that number increased to 22% one year later in 2017," stated Youth Services Director Eileen McNulty. "Also, 49% of high school students reports that marijuana is easy to access."

Among the positive, protective factors are that 82% of youth report feeling comfortable asking for help from their parent or guardian and 66% report that their parents talk to them about substance abuse."

"There are a lot of benefits to being a recovery friendly community," stated Councilwoman Mary Fortier, who serves as Council liaison to the Mayor's Opioid Task Force. "Chief among them are reduced substance abuse, fewer overdoses, job stability, and less strain on public resources and law enforcement."

Establishing itself as a Recovery Friendly Community will also allow the city of Bristol to compete for a "Community Mini-Grant" of up to \$5,000 under the Connecticut State Opioid Response Initiative, funded through the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Those interested in learning more about the Recovery Friendly Community initiative are encouraged to reach out to the Youth & Community Services Department at 860-314-4690 or the Mayor's Office at 860-584-6250.

The next Task Force meeting is Thursday, April 18 at 6:30pm in the First Floor Meeting Room at City Hall.

Contact:

Cathy Savino, Mayor's Office: [860-584-6250](tel:860-584-6250)

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