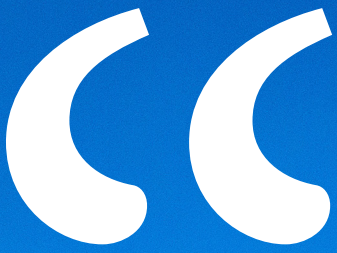




ANNUAL
REPORT

22
23



Chairperson's Remarks

The past year has been one of growth and change. The award of a number of new grants supported SERAC's continued work in the field of Prevention. From engaging rural communities in wellness activities to the distribution of NARCAN in the northeastern region, preventing underage drinking to youth leadership training in the schools, and gambling and suicide prevention training, SERAC is the face of prevention in Eastern Connecticut. These grants are indicative of the priorities being placed on addressing potentially addictive behaviors with all age populations from all walks of life.

SERAC started the year with five employees and ended the year with 10! This growth required quick action in not only hiring, but in developing work stations and strengthening onboarding practices. With long-term Associate Director Angela Duhaime in place as the Interim Director, the day-to-day operations continued without disruption. After an extensive search, it was clear to the Board of Directors that Angela's years of experience at SERAC, from grant writing to program implementation and data collection, made her the top candidate to continue the important work of supporting 41 communities in identifying and addressing their needs related to addictions, suicide and mental health.

Sue Radway



Biennial Regional Priority Report

2021-2022

In partnership with the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) and the Center for Prevention Evaluation and Statistics (CPES), SERAC completed the biennial prioritization process for Eastern Connecticut in the spring of 2023. This process included conducting interviews and focus groups with over 132 key stakeholders in the region as well as compiling and synthesizing quantitative and qualitative data into epidemiological profiles to reflect the current status of several issues related to substance use, mental health, and problem gambling. This information was used to rank issues within the region to prioritize them for planning purposes. Top priorities for the next 2 years include:

1. Suicide
2. Heroin/Fentanyl
3. Depression
4. Alcohol
5. Trauma & PTSD
6. Prescription Drug Misuse

Catchment Area Councils: Connecticut is divided into 23 Catchment Area Councils with 4 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. Catchment Area Council members advocate for change, recommend funding for mental health services, and provide inspiration to the community from those who have lived experience. SERAC meets monthly with Catchment Area Council members in the Northeast and Southeast to discuss relevant behavioral health issues, learn about what's happening in their communities, and provide legislative updates. SERAC has also provided Question Persuade and Refer and Naloxone training, a presentation on the dangers of vaping, and problem gambling awareness training. This partnership with members and their respective mental health agencies has allowed us to act as liaison between the Catchment Area Council and Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, as well as collect vital information for our Regional Priorities Report.



The purpose of the Local Prevention Council Grant Program is to facilitate the development of culturally competent substance use prevention initiatives in the form of local councils and coalitions aimed at citizens across the lifespan. This past year, 34 communities received the local prevention council grant to plan activities for vaping/electronic nicotine delivery systems across Eastern CT. This included a review of school policies, curriculum updates, purchasing vape detectors for schools, youth led merchant education, PSA's created by youth distributed, banners for parks and recreations, contract speakers for parents, youth, and/or school staff, and compliance checks!

The Regional Prevention/Local Prevention Council (LPC) Grant meetings unite collaborations across SERAC's 41 communities to address underage drinking, cannabis use, prescription drug misuse, and opioid use amongst our residents. During these meetings we assess current regional and local drug trends, plan LPC initiatives and activities, collaborate on training opportunities and advocate for policy changes.

Regional Gambling Team

Awareness and Prevention Initiatives

SERAC's Regional Gambling Awareness Team meets quarterly to discuss regional and local needs, gaps, services, and initiatives. SERAC partners and engages community leaders in problem gambling prevention, treatment, and recovery and to integrate problem gambling awareness and advocacy into behavioral health programs. Four communities were awarded Gambling Awareness Mini-Grants. SERAC conducted four Community Awareness Program (CAP) trainings with sixty people attending. This year we utilized our local radio stations, gas stations, placemats at local restaurants and CCPG Helpline window decals to locations with gaming licenses to increase problem gambling awareness and promote Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling's helpline number. The Regional Gambling Awareness Team attended CADCA Bootcamp and four of our team members received their Certificate of Competency from DMHAS's Problem Gambling Services. SERAC hosted three gambling-focused trainings, Growing Trends in Gaming and Gambling and Today's Emerging Adults with 70 people in attendance; and Sexts, Lies, and Video Games with 30 people in attendance; and Gambling as a Leading Risk for Suicide with 35 people in attendance. SERAC also promoted problem gambling services and gambling awareness through a robust social media campaign for Problem Gambling Awareness Month. SERAC participated in problem gambling awareness events at East Lyme High School, Otis Library in Norwich and presented information at several local prevention councils.



Regional Suicide Advisory Board

SERAC staff coordinate the Region 3 Suicide Advisory Board (RSAB). The goal of the board is to integrate and coordinate suicide prevention, intervention and postvention and grief support and recovery activities across multiple sectors and settings within the 41 towns of the region. The board meets monthly to discuss regional suicide loss data, 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 of the membership. The board's membership consists of individuals from diverse back grounds, from direct service to lived experience, working in a variety of settings. The RSAB membership has grown 70 percent since its inception and continues to grow with 85 current members with a significant number attending each month's meeting.

SERAC as the RSAB coordinating agency has provided dedicated trainings and presentations to the region on the topics of LGBTQ+ Youth, Resources for Veterans, Grief Resources, Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale (CSSRS), Suicide and Aging, Crisis Supports and Suicide Prevention for Autistic People and Dennis Gillan: 3 Brothers, 2 Suicides, 1 Suicide Prevention Message. Over 300 people have participated in these training courses. Post course evaluations have provided high ratings on our offerings.

SERAC staff are trained to offer the suicide prevention curriculums of Question Persuade Refer (QPR), Talk Saves Lives, and Vital Cog which all can be implemented in a variety of settings. Additionally, staff are trained to provide Naloxone, Postvention, Overview of the 988 system, Safe Messaging and Youth Mental Health First Aid training. SERAC staff have provided classes to general audiences as well as specific groups both virtually as well as in person. Some audiences of note are nurses working in home as well as school-based settings, EMT/EMR staff from local fire departments, local prevention coalitions, domestic violence advocates and residential staff working in higher education settings in the region.

The RSAB coordinator participates in the monthly Connecticut Suicide Advisory Board (CTSAB) and is the co-chair of the boards' Postvention and Loss Support

Work Group and a member of the Lethal Means and Education/Advocacy Subcommittees. In addition, staff attend the Eastern CT School Safety and Crisis Response Committee, the JED Campus Coalition at Three Rivers Community College and the Local Interagency Service Team (LIST). The RSAB coordinator meets with the staff from the Uncas Health District to collaborate on their Center for Disease Control (CDC) grant to work on suicide prevention in the area. The five statewide RSAB coordinators meet monthly to share information and ideas for future local and statewide efforts.

SERAC with the assistance of DHMAS, the United Way of Connecticut and the City of Norwich was able to erect two suicide prevention signs at an attempt location in the region. The RSAB Coordinator partnered with several recreation departments to offer QPR training for their summer counselors. As part of their teaming with SERAC, the departments received a water cooler with suicide prevention messaging. SERAC partnered with several libraries to conduct readings of Gizmo's Pawesome Guide to Mental Health. These events featured a local comfort, representatives from the local youth emergency mobile crisis service provider and free books for all in attendance. The state's 1 Word, 1 Voice, 1 Life Campaign materials have been provided to attendees as well as items which reduce access to lethal means, such as Deterra, medication storage boxes, and gun locks, at a host of events such as farmer's markets, senior expos, school wellness events, Fresh Check Days, and veteran coffee houses throughout the region. The agency's campaign Bring the Light to Mental Health was featured on laptop/water bottle stickers which were distributed at a variety of agency trainings and tabling events.

SERAC has provided direct support to several schools and communities following suicide losses as well as untimely deaths. The support has involved coordination with local provides, sharing resource and best practices and follow up educational offerings. On two occasions, SERAC staff facilitated Posttraumatic Stress Management (PTSM) Groups for individuals impacted by the loss. The RSAB Coordinator has provided an Overview of Postvention training to a variety of schools, communities, and agencies with the goal of creating teams to assist with postvention efforts at the very local level.

Partnerships For Success

Strategic Prevention Framework

In October 2019, SERAC was awarded a five-year PFS-SPF grant from SAMHSA to increase the capacity of 21 towns in the Quiet Corner of CT to address youth substance abuse. The geographic area under this initiative include the following towns: Ashford, Brooklyn, Canterbury, Chaplin, Columbia, Coventry, Eastford, Hampton, Killingly, Lebanon, Mansfield, Plainfield, Pomfret, Putnam, Scotland, Sterling, Thompson, Union, Willington, Windham, and Woodstock. In the five year period, SERAC hopes to accomplish the following goals:

- Strengthen the regional infrastructure to implement the steps of the Strategic Prevention Framework
- Raise the current readiness score for the region to address youth substance use
- Increase data collection efforts across the 21 towns
- Reduce the rate of binge drinking among youth by 25% in 2024
- Reduce the rate of nicotine use (including electronic delivery systems) by 25% in 2024
- Reduce the rate of marijuana use by 25% in 2024

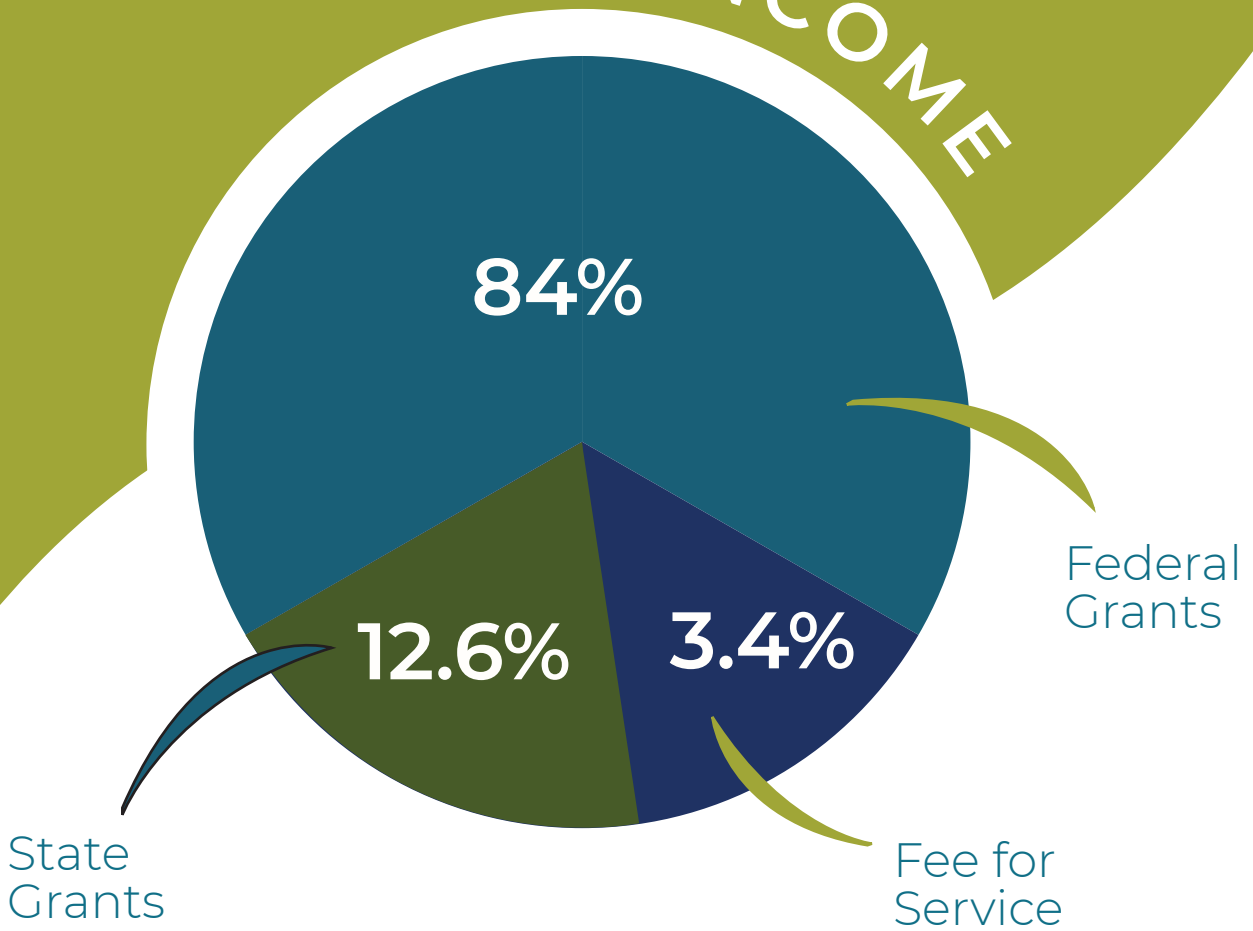
The Strategic Prevention Framework grant is just entering its final year of funding. During these first 4 years, we launched the 21 For A Reason campaign. This online resource was created to help spread awareness on public policy and youth substance use. 21 For A Reason provides resources and information regarding the risks associated with alcohol, nicotine/vaping, cannabis, and online gambling and gaming. The website contains helpful facts, warning signs, tips for parents, merchants, and resources for help.

Besides the 21 For a Reason Campaign, SERAC has provided training from SEARCH, CADCA, SAM, Cultural Inclusion, and Prevention Ethics. During these trainings, community members learned about prevention science, the Strategic Prevention Framework, asset building, cannabis prevention, and how to incorporate cultural inclusion and ethics into their ongoing prevention work.

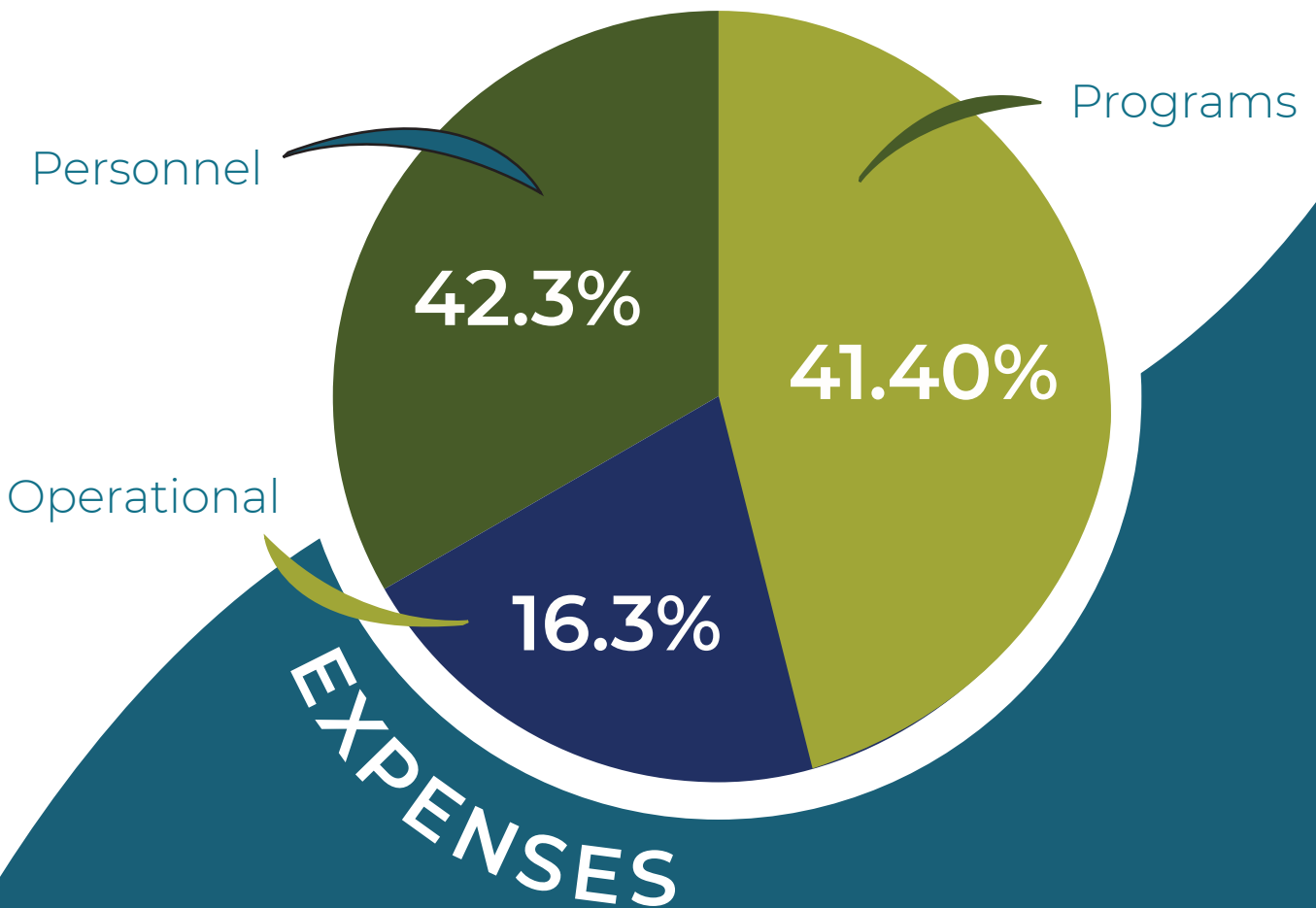
Regional Prevention Action Team meetings are held on the first Thursday, bi-monthly in October, December, February, April, June, and August from 9:00-10:30. During these meetings, coalition members discuss community policies, regional and local prevention efforts, data collection, and upcoming events and trainings.

Fiscal Report

INCOME



EXPENSES



State Opioid Response

Region 3 has nine State Opioid Response mini grantees who work to implement substance abuse prevention and behavioral health promotion initiatives; host Question, Persuade & Refer (QPR)/Narcan trainings; promote state-wide opioid awareness campaigns; and participate in Drug Take Back Days. This year, SERAC delivered 20 TSL/QPR trainings and disseminated over 200 boxes of Narcan. Seventeen people were certified by SERAC to teach others how to administer Narcan.



Recovery Friendly Workplace

Recovery Friendly Workplace (RFW): This state initiative is dovetailed into the State Opioid Response grant and partners the Regional Behavioral Health Action Organization with the Department of Labor, Department of Public Health, and Department of Mental Health Addiction Services.

Connecticut's Recovery Friendly Workplace (RFW) Initiative challenges stigma and empowers workplaces to provide support for employees in recovery and all those impacted by substance use disorder. SERAC supports employers in their efforts to create a healthier workplace environment which results in a safer work environment, a positive and psychologically safe workplace culture, and makes substance use recovery resources available to employees and their families.

SERAC celebrates the addition of the Town of Thompson, Thompson Public Schools, Alarming Ideas, the Town of Windham, Madonna Place, Cozy Corner, Covenant Soup Kitchen and TEEG to our growing list of Recovery Friendly Workplaces, where they are joined by Beer'd Brewing, Keith's Appliances and Right of Way Solutions. Several other workplaces are currently in the process to receive their certification and we look forward to announcing them in the future. If you are interested in making your workplace Recovery Friendly, please contact SERAC for more information.



Congressional Direct Spending Grant

In October of 2021, SERAC was awarded a one-year grant Congressional Direct Spending grant to address cultural disparities in the prevention of mental health crisis, developing addictions, and suicide deaths by fostering relationship building and community trust as protective factors among adults aged 18 and older in 13 rural communities of Eastern Connecticut. The geographic area under this initiative include the following towns: Ashford, Bozrah, Canterbury, Chaplin, Columbia, Eastford, Franklin, Hampton, Lebanon, Lisbon, Scotland, Sprague, and Union. Under the grant we outreached towns to identify key issues affecting individual towns as well as completed needs assessments with community members to identify disparities. We provided monthly newsletters with information regarding trainings, and meetings that are provided to support mental health and substance use awareness within communities including promotion of the Regional Suicide Advisory Board and Local Prevention Coalitions. Through the Congressional Direct Spending

grant, we held multiple tabling events to promote community resource awareness as well as safe medication storage and disposal, and promoting National Prevention week within the communities. We additionally provided a 4-part training series to promote overall wellness based on the 8 dimensions of wellness, a Life Initiated training focused on personal development and leadership training, as well as providing a virtual Mental Health First Aid training. Under the Congressional Direct Spending grant, information on mental health and substance abuse services were shared with the community through an online campaign called “Bring Light to Mental Health.” Bring the Light to Mental Health provides resources and information regarding who is at increased risk of mental health conditions, tests individuals knowledge of mental health, as well as providing local and national resources to support mental health. This campaign also placed a focus on rural communities, gender and LGBTQIA+ and Two Spirit populations.

STOP Grant

Sober Truth on Preventing Underage Drinking Act Grant (STOP Act) works to prevent and reduce alcohol use among youth and young adults aged 12-20 in communities across Eastern Connecticut. With this funding, SERAC will reestablish the Adolescent Learning and Leadership Institute (ALLI) program to increase and strengthen youth coalition members and expand education on underage drinking and binge drinking.

This is intended for middle and high school age youth that are vulnerable to health disparities, including juvenile justice diversion program, JRB's, alternative education programs, LGBTQ+, veteran and military families, and Indigenous population.

SERAC hopes to accomplish the following goals:

- Address community norms regarding alcohol youth use
- Reduce opportunities for underage drinking
- Create changes in underage drinking enforcement laws
- Address penalties for underage use
- Reduce the negative consequences associated with underage drinking
- Reduce the rate of binge alcohol use (4 or more drinks) among youth and young adults by 25% by September 2026
- Implement the Adolescent Learning and Leadership Program by September 2026

The STOP grant is funded in partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services and Substance Abuse and Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Youth Surveys Conducted

East Haven
Sterling
Lebanon
Ledyard
Brooklyn



Board & Staff

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Riverfront Children's Center

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Suicide Prevention Program Lead

Mark Irons

Epidemiologist

Jennika Jenkins

Program Coordinator

Megan Erdman

Recovery Friendly Workplace Project Coordinator

Eric Reynolds

Program Coordinator

Danielle Amaral



Data Capacity Building

In the past year, SERAC has collected Youth Survey data from over

7,000

youth from 9 towns in the region.

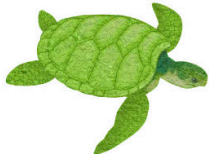
SERAC's technical assistance and capacity building went national as we partnered with a youth serving organization in California to assist in data collection and analysis for their first Youth Survey. Similarly, SERAC is currently partnered with two coalitions in the region acting as an Evaluator for Prevention in Connecticut Communities grants.

SERAC published the 2021-2022 Regional Youth Survey results this year. This report covered youth responses from 8 towns across the region, with most of the representation coming from the southeastern corner. Key findings include:

- Marijuana had the highest recent use rate (5.6%) than any other substance across all grades (past 30 days)
- Only about $\frac{1}{4}$ of students report that there is a great risk associated with using marijuana 1-2 times a week
- Over half of students report getting alcohol from their parents with permission and 39.5% report getting alcohol at a party with an adult's permission
- About 2 in 10 youth report that alcohol is very easy to access



Funders & Donors



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