



**Newport County  
Prevention Coalition**  
Member of Rhode Island Regional Coalitions

# Reach

Moving Prevention Forward

May 2023

## May is Mental Health Awareness Month

**Recognition and education are important ways to remove the stigma associated with mental illness. Mental Health Awareness Month creates a time and space to start a conversation.**

This national month of awareness has been recognized since 1949 by mental health activists and practitioners across the country as they have worked to educate the public about mental illness, raise awareness surrounding research and treatments, reduce the stigma associated with mental illness, and celebrate recovery from mental illness. Because of misconceptions and stigma surrounding mental health issues, people often suffer in silence and don't seek treatment. Mental health awareness is vital to improving understanding of mental health and increase access to healthcare for those who need it.

Whether or not someone personally suffers with a mental health issue, *Mental Health Awareness Month* helps people recognize the ways mental illness impacts their lives, educates people about available services, and highlights ways to advocate. Almost every day the news reports some devastating news about mental illness — often in a way that further stigmatizes individuals.

Recognition and education are important ways to remove the stigma associated with mental illness. *Mental Health Awareness Month* creates a time and space to start a conversation. Talking openly about mental health can reduce the misconceptions and stigma, and can encourage those who are suffering to seek help and find a support network.

Take some time in May to become better informed, reach out to the Newport County Prevention Coalition — through our *No Wrong Door Initiative* we can get you or someone you love pointed in the right direction.

### **Educators and Youth Workers: Support LGBTQ+ youth**

LGBTQ+ youth are at an increased risk for mental health conditions and suicide. In fact, The Trevor Project — an organization that works to prevent suicide in LGBTQ+ youth — found that LGBTQ+ youth who reported having at least one accepting adult were 40% less likely to report a suicide attempt in 2019.

### **There are a number of ways to support LGBTQ+ youth inside and out of the classroom. Consider doing the following:**

- *Designate your business or classroom as an LGBTQ+ safe space.*
- *Take an ally training course through The Trevor Project with your colleagues.*
- *Sponsor a Gay Straight Alliance or other inclusive club in your school.*
- *The Gay Lesbian & Straight Education Network has awesome resources for teachers and students.*



# Introducing Our Partnership For Success Coordinator, Scott Eisner



Scott Eisner

Scott is the Partnership for Success Coordinator at Newport County Prevention Coalition in Portsmouth, RI. Scott's professional goal is to work in collaboration with the local schools and police departments in an effort to reduce the amount of underage drinking in Newport County.

Before joining Newport County Prevention Coalition, Scott taught eighth grade English in Massachusetts for over twelve years. He also taught summer school classes, tutored students for standardized testing, and was a part-time HiSET (formally referred to as GED) instructor. Scott transitioned his career into the mental health field a little

over ten years ago. He felt students needed more time dedicated to their mental health and overall well-being and decided he could make more of an impact working for an organization such as Newport County Prevention Coalition.

Scott is a graduate of Somerset High School and earned his bachelor's degree in sociology in addition to a master's degree in education. He has attended and participated in a variety of relevant training courses including motivational interviewing, crisis intervention, and Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT), all of which Scott believes will help him in his current position.

Scott lives in Riverside with his wife, Jennifer. He is the lead guitarist for the Rhode Island based band "Wicked Rhode" (check them out on Facebook). In addition to playing the guitar and several other instruments, Scott enjoys hiking with his pit-mix Bailey and is an avid Bruins fan.

## Effects of Alcohol on Teenage Brain Development

Research shows that young people's brains keep developing well into their 20s. Alcohol can alter this development, potentially affecting both brain structure and function.

— National Institutes of Health/National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

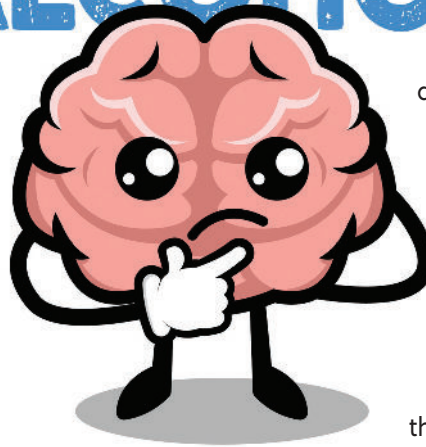
Alcohol consumption during adolescence has several structural and functional consequences that persist throughout adulthood. The time of onset of alcohol use, the frequency of use and the amount used all affect development. Chronic, heavy alcohol consumption from an early age is linked to severe long-term cognitive deficits.

### The Short-Term Effects of Alcohol on the Teenage Brain

The precise mechanisms of alcohol-induced alterations in brain development remain unclear, but studies have identified a number of short-term consequences. Among the most impactful of these consequences are reductions in white matter and grey matter in areas of the brain that regulate the reward system and executive functions.

Alcohol has also been shown to cause neuroinflammation, which is the brain's attempt to limit the damage caused by alcohol. Neuroinflammation is currently an area of active research, but it is known that the immediate consequences of neuroinflammation include altered local and long-distance signaling in the brain, which can interrupt normal developmental processes.

# ALCOHOL



### Drinking Levels Defined

**Binge Drinking:** The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) defines binge

drinking as a pattern of drinking alcohol that brings blood alcohol concentration (BAC) to 0.08 percent — or 0.08 grams of alcohol per deciliter — or higher. For a typical adult, this pattern corresponds to consuming five or more standard drinks (or alcoholic drink equivalents) for men, or four or more standard drinks for women, in about two hours.

However, research shows that fewer drinks in the same time frame are necessary to reach the same BAC in adolescents (compared to adults):

only three drinks for adolescent females and three to five drinks for adolescent males, depending on their age and size.

**Heavy Drinking:** NIAAA defines heavy drinking for men as more than four drinks on any day or more than 14 drinks in a week, and for women as more than three drinks a day or more than 7 drinks per week.

For additional information, visit <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/niaaa-resources-alcohol-and-brain>.



**This podcast features Mark Collins of the Chris Collins Foundation, talking about the origin of this peer to peer program.**

**Hosts: Can you tell us about the Foundation which was developed in Chris' honor?**

**Mark:** We started it pretty shortly after his death and really wanted to continue the work Chris was doing. I looked around to find some kind of program to help youth but didn't really find anything local. So I searched online and found this peer to peer program the University of Michigan started back in 2009. Everything about their program was just what we were looking for.



*Mark Collins*

It's a student-based program, evidence based. It's been proven to reduce stigma in schools to report early help seeking and educate students about mental health and mental illnesses. It teaches the students involved in the peer to peer program how to create a campaign so they share everything they learn in a training conference

that we sponsor at the beginning of the school year. They take everything they learn and create a campaign and share all this knowledge about mental health with their peers. This program is based on some scientific evidence that shows that peers are more likely to listen to each other than they are a well-meaning adult. And students spend a lot of time together in schools, and after school activities, social media. So it's really a group of friends who notice if something's changed about something or maybe somebody that's struggling. This program really helps them learn how to approach them, how to talk to them, how to support them, and most importantly how to help them find help whether it be at school with a counselor, or outside of school.

The program is very clear in training the students that they're not counselors and they're not meant to fix anybody's problems. They're meant to be educators, activists, and supporters. It's really been successful in Rhode Island. We started in two high schools. Shortly thereafter, we added a third high school. But then COVID hit and was tough to continue to expand. This past September, we did add seven more schools to the program.

**Hear the full Totally Preventable podcast "Organization against teen suicide. The Chris Collins Foundation." on all of your favorite podcast platforms.**

## A Parent's Guide: Sensory Regulation Training Series

Sensory regulation is a crucial component of a child's development that enables them to process and respond to sensory information in a healthy and adaptive way. Children who struggle with sensory regulation may experience difficulty with daily tasks, as well as emotional and physical challenges that can impact their overall well-being. It's essential to support and enhance children's sensory regulation skills through appropriate interventions and activities that promote healthy sensory processing.

Recently, the Newport County Prevention Coalition partnered with the McNeil Children's Institute to offer a free training series for parents called "A Parent's Guide" to promote self-regulation among elementary and preschool-age children. Led by Sarah McNeill, the training seminars provided guidance and support to parents and caretakers regarding sensory dysregulation in children and effective strategies that can be implemented within the family system and school setting to promote appropriate problem-solving strategies.

The training series consisted of three sessions, each focusing on a different aspect of sensory regulation. The first session covered topics such as identifying sensory regulation difficulties and developing sensory diets to improve self-regulation. The second session focused on practical techniques that parents can use at home to promote positive behavior changes in their children, emphasizing the importance of consistency, positive reinforcement, and setting clear boundaries when it comes to managing children's behavior. The third and final session provided parents with a comprehensive understanding of the various options available to children in school to improve their learning skills and attention, including Special Education resources and how to request an Individualized Education Plan or 504 implementation.

For those who missed the live sessions, the recorded training series is available on the Newport County Prevention Coalition's YouTube channel. By watching the training sessions, parents and caretakers can gain valuable insights into sensory regulation difficulties and effective strategies for promoting self-regulation among children. With the support of these resources, parents can help their children achieve success in daily life and promote healthy emotional, cognitive, and physical development.



# An Ode to Water



## **Water. An essential source for all people, and the earth.**

"April showers bring May flowers," they say, and it's true! Generous rainfall results in quicker and more abundant blooms later on. Your body is no different. How much you hydrate yourself determines a lot regarding how your body functions and how you feel. You've probably heard it said over and over again — DRINK MORE WATER. And you're going to hear it again, right here and now. So here's an ode to water.

**Firstly, water detoxifies your system.** It cleanses you of the waste that builds up in your body over time. Even when you sweat, this is water pushing out toxins in your system.

**On top of that, water helps you stay cool.** By having water circulate in your body, it helps regulate your body temperature so you stay comfortable. This is especially important during the summer months!

**It gets better.** Water also helps with your performance — both physical and mental. Even a little bit of dehydration can lead to fatigue, headaches, and sluggishness. By staying hydrated, your body will thank you by having more energy and being more alert and responsive when it comes to mental tasks!

Honestly, you probably didn't need another PSA telling you to drink more water, but at the same time, maybe you did! Not enough people drink the right amount of water, and it shows. So try it — drink two full water bottles a day, or more, and see if you notice any changes in yourself!

# Coalition Meetings

The Newport County Prevention Coalition is comprised of the Little Compton, Middletown, Newport, Portsmouth & Tiverton Coalitions.

## **Newport County Coalition Meetings**

3rd Tuesday of every month  
**10am – Portsmouth Office Park,  
300 High Point Ave.**

Director: Rebecca Elwell  
elwell@riprevention.org

## **Little Compton Coalition Meetings**

2nd Tuesday of every month  
**1pm – Little Compton Town Hall**  
Coordinator: Brian Gough  
littlecompton@riprevention.org

## **Middletown Coalition Meetings**

Fourth Thursday of every month  
**6pm – Middletown Town Hall,  
Second floor conference room**  
Director: Lori Verderosa  
mpc@middletownri.com

## **Newport Coalition Meetings**

3rd Monday of every month  
**1pm – Newport Police Station**  
newport@riprevention.org

## **Portsmouth Coalition Meetings**

2nd Wednesday of every month  
**8:30am – Portsmouth Office Park,  
300 High Point Ave.**

Coordinator: Cleo Allen  
portsmouth@riprevention.org

## **Tiverton Coalition Meetings**

2nd Tuesday of every month  
**10am – Holy Trinity Parish Hall,  
1956 Main Road, Tiverton**  
Coordinator: Brian Gough  
tiverton@riprevention.org



Newsletter articles coordinated by Gregory Thompson. [gthompson@riprevention.org](mailto:gthompson@riprevention.org). For more information about the Coalition, contact NCPC Director Rebecca Elwell at 401-835-5311 or [elwell@riprevention.org](mailto:elwell@riprevention.org). [www.newportcountyprevention.org](http://www.newportcountyprevention.org)