



Presenting:

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Transforming Children's Behavioral Health Policy and Planning Committee (TCB)

December 18, 2024

Background and Purpose

In late 2021, a large cohort of community leaders, now representing over three dozen youth-serving Stamford organizations, came together in a singular initiative: **Stamford Youth Mental Health Alliance** (YMHA).

The collaborative approach of the YMHA is to address the burgeoning youth mental health crisis through a community-based strategy and response with an emphasis on universal promotion of wellness, prevention, early intervention and targeted services/care coordination dovetailed into the evolving mental health infrastructure.



What population do we serve?

- Stamford, Connecticut, located in Fairfield County, has a population of 136,188 residents, and is the state's fastest growing and second largest city.
- Stamford has 45 economically and socially diverse neighborhoods, several of which have high rates of poverty and immigrant concentration.
- Stamford has evolved into a majority-minority city, with 52% of residents being people of color and 32% foreign-born.
- In 2020, the city was 49% non-Hispanic white, 14% Black or African American, 0.3% American Indian or Alaska Native, 9% Asian, 3% two-or-more races, and 27% Hispanic or Latino (of any race).
- Seventy-five different languages are spoken at home, with English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, Bengali, Ukrainian and Polish among the most common.



YMHA Organizational Model

To create a broad-based, proactive and effective response to the youth mental health crisis, the YMHA is organized into three integrated areas of strategic focus: **Mental Wellness**, **Continuum of Care** and **Communication**.

- **Mental Wellness** (Prevention): Addressing the mental health issues of children and youth is most often performed reactively, following appearance of a problem. YMHA enhances prevention efforts, focusing ‘upstream’ to promote mental wellness, by both strengthening protective factors and reducing risk factors.
- **Continuum of Care** (Clinical): It is imperative to assess our current mental health infrastructure using an established continuum of care model to identify gaps in services, systemic barriers to care, underutilized supports and the need for additional services.
- **Communication:** Mental health problems are often associated with stigma or seen as “someone else’s concern”. The YMHA public information campaigns work to reframe that thinking and spur a community-based understanding and response to this urgent public health issue.



Challenges and Opportunities - Mental Wellness

- **Improve ability of youth serving professionals to positively interact and support children, building capacity through training and networking.**
 - Conduct free, quarterly training on topics consisting of Restorative Practices, QPR, cultural competency, reduction of stigma, impact of social media, trauma, and other pertinent topics.
- **Address needs of parents, caregivers, teachers, and others to learn about youth mental health challenges, early indicators and prevention and to build requisite skills for promoting healthy youth development.**
 - Offer free Mental Health First Aid and Suicide Prevention training for community members, in multiple languages.
 - Implement innovative native language Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) trainings in Creole and Spanish.



Challenges and Opportunities - Continuum of Care



- **Solve challenge of parents and caregivers who lack information about available resources for clinical care when they have a child in need.**
 - Produce the Stamford Youth Mental Health [Resource Guide](#) as a 'must have' tool for accessing information on MH resources by service sector, spoken language and program.
 - Available in multiple languages, in digital and print formats.
- **Most children receive their primary mental health care in school settings, but there is little coordination, accountability and impact evaluation through these levels of care.**
 - Collaborate with Stamford Public Schools to improve in-school clinical and detection services.
 - Assist SPS and affiliated MH partners to implement improvements in school-based mental health support and detection services.

Challenges and Opportunities - Communication

- **Promote positive image of good mental health and destigmatize mental illness through a robust public education campaign.**
 - Design and execute social media, advertising and public relations campaigns to reach and inform multiple audiences.
- **Reach into community settings through multi-cultural outreach events to bring needed information and support in community settings.**
 - Support relevant community outreach initiatives to bring YMHA brand, imagery, messaging and resources into youth-focused outreach events.



Communication: Resource Guide

- Information on all Stamford youth-serving providers
- Branded consistent with all YMHA materials
- Available in multiple languages
- Guides and posters at Library branches, pediatricians and other organizations across Stamford



youth **mental health**
resource
guide

don't carry it alone.
WE'VE GOT YOU



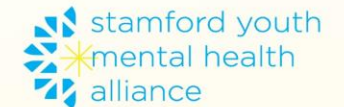
StamfordYouthMentalHealthAlliance.org

Our kids' mental health matters

There are many resources to support the mental health of children and adolescents in Stamford. Access your copy of the Youth Mental Health Resource Guide today.

English | Español | Kreyòl | українською мовою

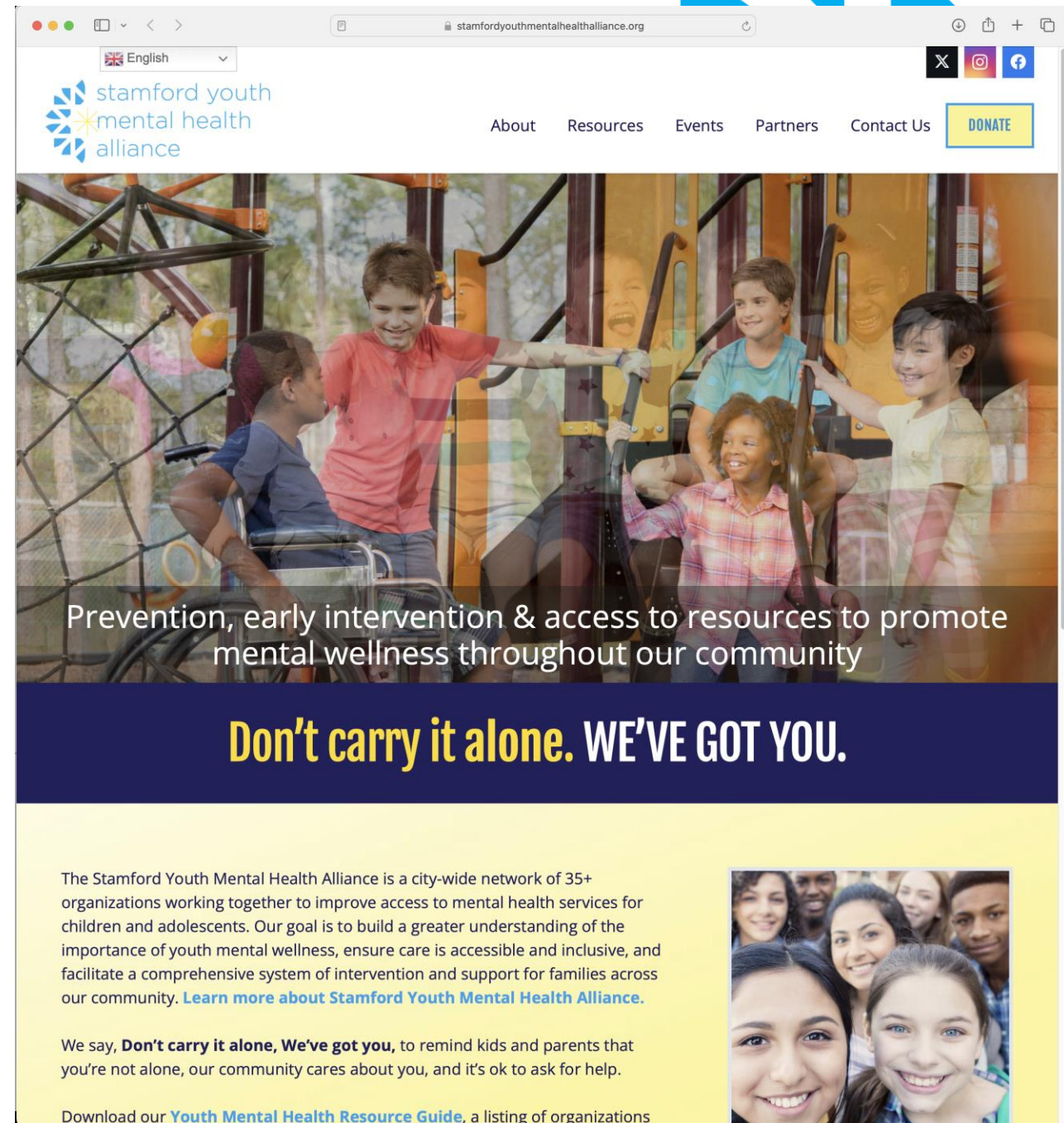
Scan this QR code or visit **StamfordYMHA.org** to access the guide online.



StamfordYouthMentalHealthAlliance.org

Communication: Summer Web Update

- More outward-facing than previous site
- Branded consistent with all YMHA materials
- Consolidated resources of all kinds
- Information about YMHA campaigns, videos, links



The screenshot shows the website for the Stamford Youth Mental Health Alliance. The browser address bar displays "stamfordyouthmentalhealthalliance.org". The site features a navigation menu with "About", "Resources", "Events", "Partners", and "Contact Us", along with a "DONATE" button. The main header includes the organization's logo and a language selector set to "English". A large hero image depicts a group of diverse children playing on a playground structure, with a boy in a wheelchair being assisted by others. Below the image, a text overlay reads: "Prevention, early intervention & access to resources to promote mental wellness throughout our community". A dark blue banner below the hero image contains the slogan "Don't carry it alone. WE'VE GOT YOU." in yellow and white text. The main content area has a yellow background and contains a paragraph describing the alliance as a city-wide network of 35+ organizations. It includes a link to "Learn more about Stamford Youth Mental Health Alliance." and a section titled "We say, Don't carry it alone, We've got you," which explains the slogan's meaning. At the bottom, there is a link to download a "Youth Mental Health Resource Guide" and a small inset image of a diverse group of smiling young people.

English

stamford youth
mental health
alliance

About Resources Events Partners Contact Us **DONATE**

Prevention, early intervention & access to resources to promote mental wellness throughout our community

Don't carry it alone. WE'VE GOT YOU.

The Stamford Youth Mental Health Alliance is a city-wide network of 35+ organizations working together to improve access to mental health services for children and adolescents. Our goal is to build a greater understanding of the importance of youth mental wellness, ensure care is accessible and inclusive, and facilitate a comprehensive system of intervention and support for families across our community. [Learn more about Stamford Youth Mental Health Alliance.](#)

We say, **Don't carry it alone, We've got you,** to remind kids and parents that you're not alone, our community cares about you, and it's ok to ask for help.

Download our [Youth Mental Health Resource Guide](#), a listing of organizations

Communication: Back to School - Social Media



Stamford Youth Mental Health Alliance
Published by Sprout Social
August 23

As you get ready for the new school year, remember – it's okay to take breaks, ask for help and prioritize self-care. You've got this!

#StamfordYMHA #MentalHealthAwareness #YouthMentalHealth



Stamford Youth Mental Health Alliance
Published by Sprout Social
August 28

Happy first day of school! Whether you're diving into student life or supporting young minds as an educator, let's create a positive environment where every student feels valued and heard.

#StamfordYMHA #MentalHealthAwareness #YouthMentalHealth



Stamford Youth Mental Health Alliance
Published by Sprout Social
September 4

New school year = new activities! Sports, clubs and hobbies are great for your mental health. What are you excited to get involved in this year?

#StamfordYMHA #MentalHealthAwareness #YouthMentalHealth



Evaluation and Impact

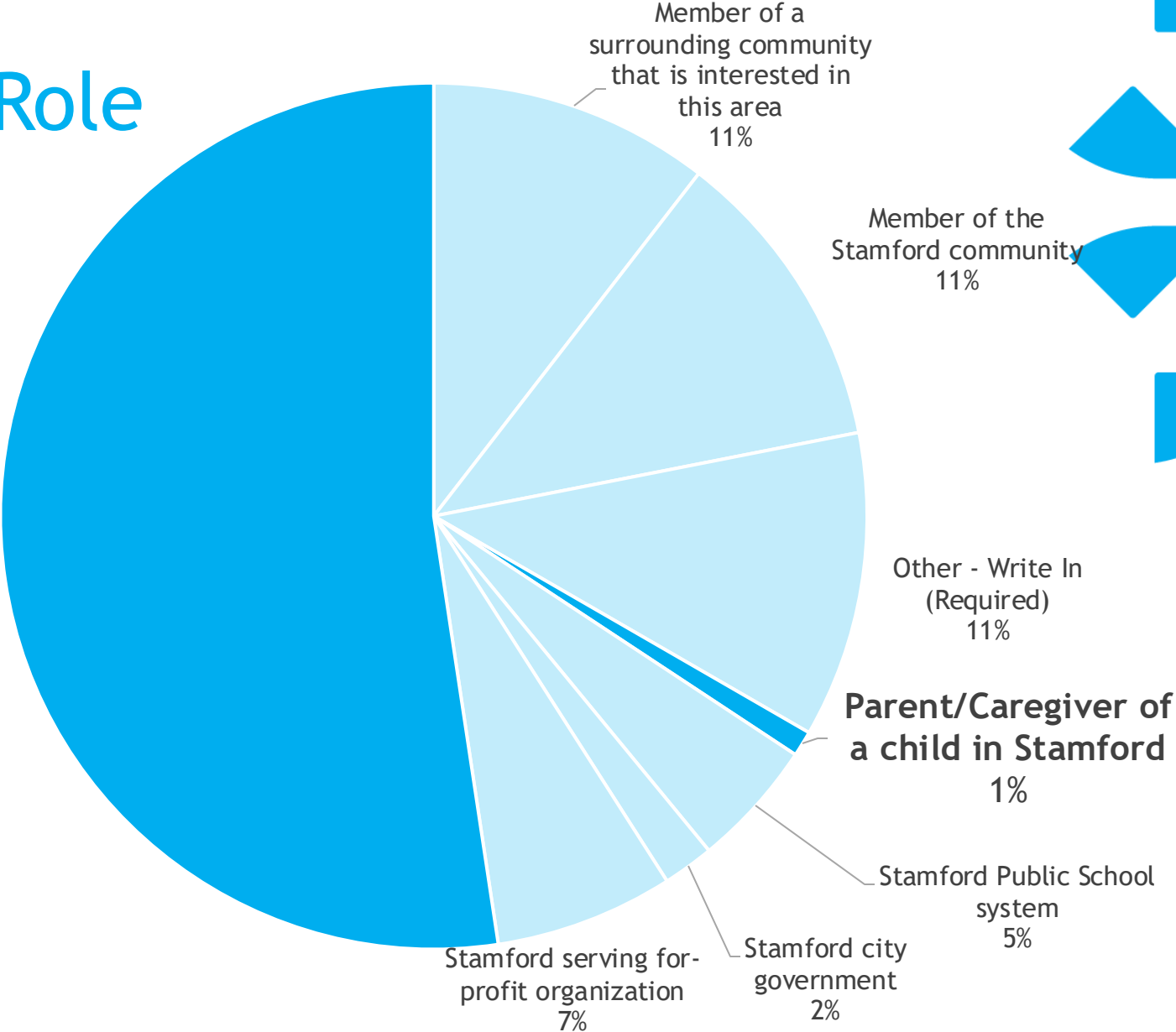


Evaluate effectiveness of Mental Health First Aid, Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) and other training applications.

- Analyze post-survey data from multiple Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) and QPR training sessions.
- Data analysis indicates whom and whom not has been participating in MHFA and QPR trainings by sector, gender, race and ethnicity.
- It tracks satisfaction responses to assess effectiveness and suitability of training

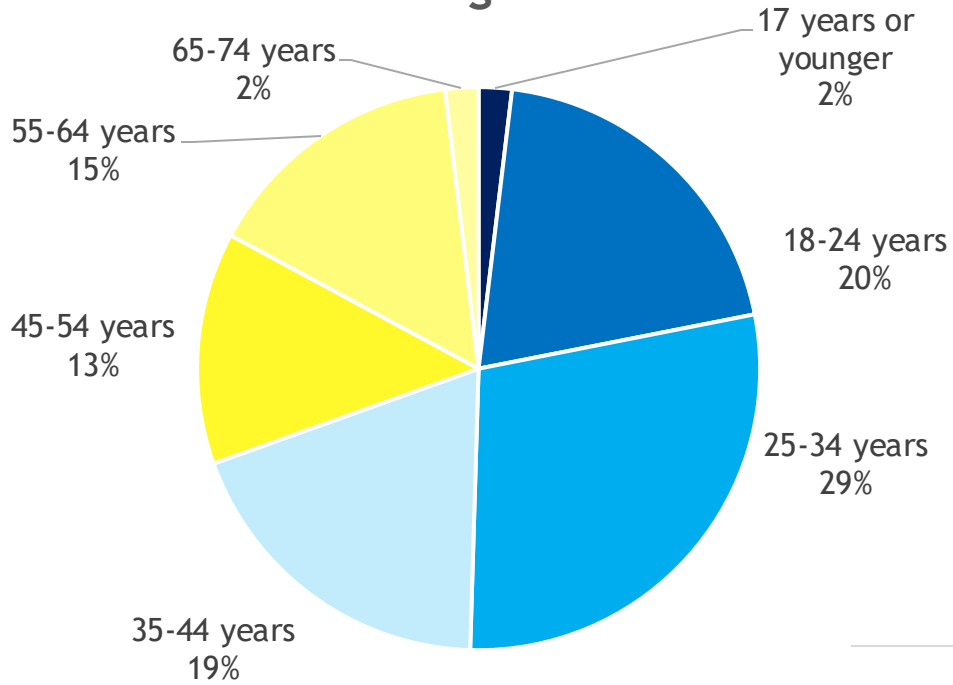
Participant Role

Stamford serving non-profit organization
52%

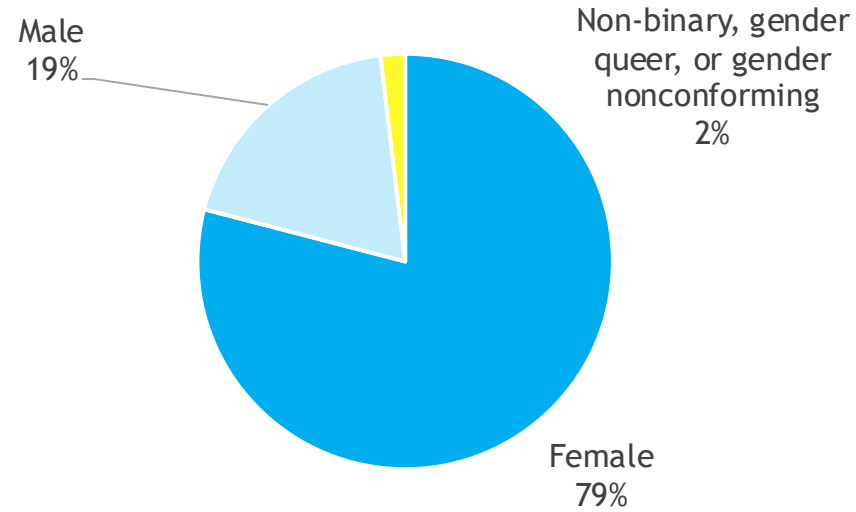


Participant Demographics

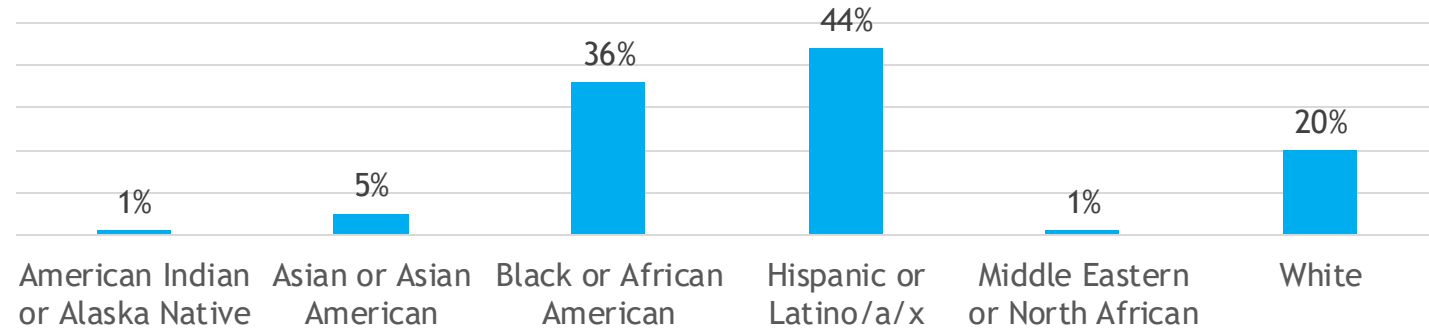
Age



Gender



Race/Ethnicity*



*Race/Ethnicity is a multi-select field, so percentages do not sum to 100.

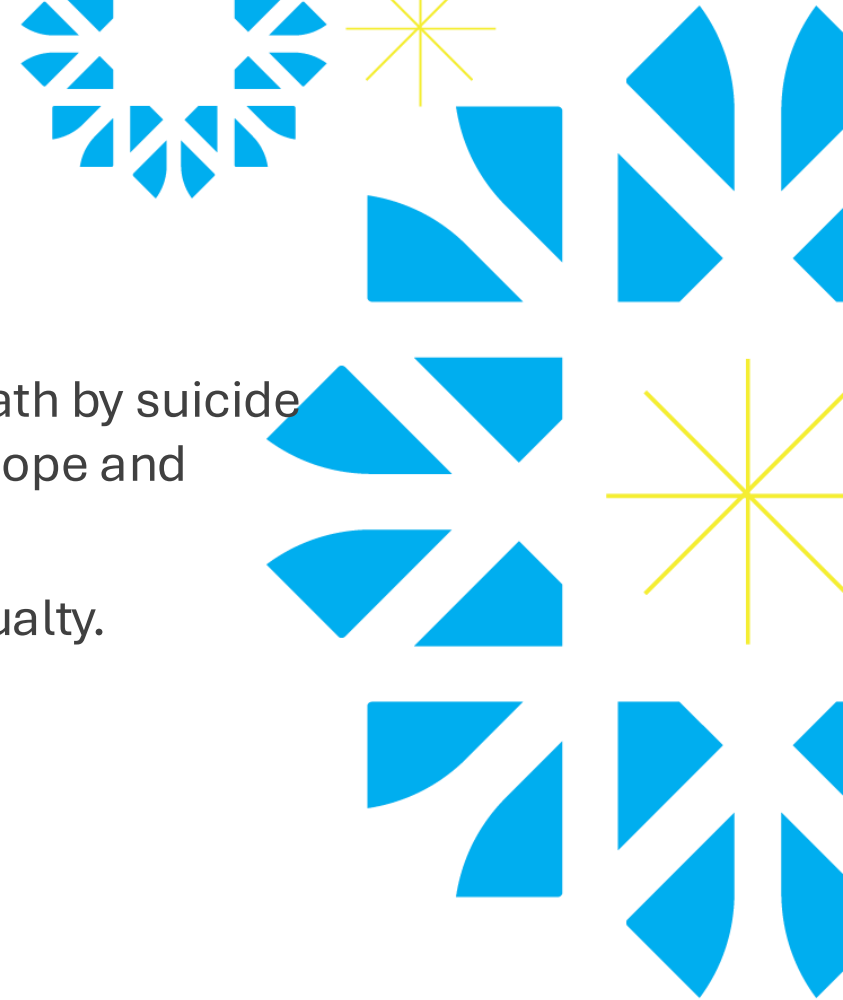
Postvention Team

Implement Suicide & Untimely Death Postvention Plan.

- Postvention Team supports community members impacted by death by suicide or untimely death with direct assistance, providing messaging of hope and support, and information on appropriate resources.
- Develop a Response and Recovery Plan for incidents of mass casualty.

Actions

- Response to 17 cases in 2024; 2 death by suicide
- Response to 76 cases since inception
- Revising plan and resource brochure based on lessons learned from implementation, types of response needed, and resources requested

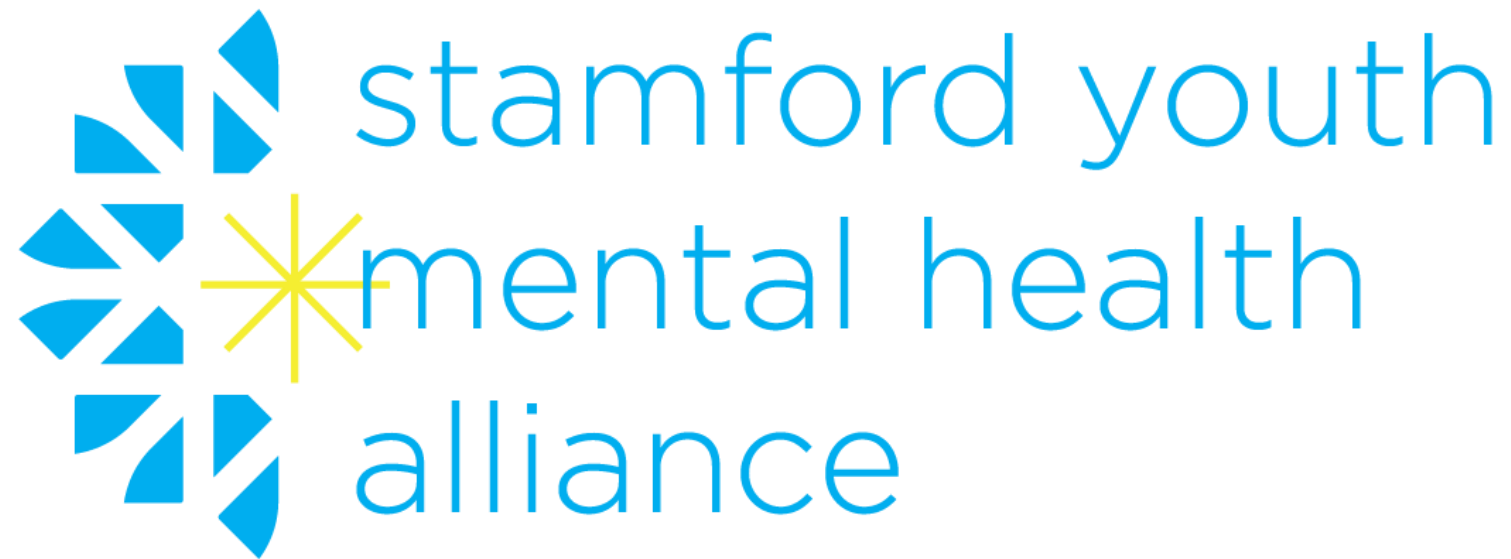


Barriers Remaining - Recommendations



Improve Care Coordination, currently fragmented, across all platforms and providers.

- Sharpen focus on improving the Continuity of Care, particularly for acute cases, by enhancing communication, referral protocols, transitional case management and coordination between all providers.
- Conducted numerous practitioner meetings and discussions to determine gaps, barriers and other challenges to improving care coordination.
- More research is required to determine the extent of challenge, identify needed resources and recommend actionable solutions.



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