

Homeless Youth Find Housing Support and *Now* Tobacco Treatment Support & Referral at Shaw House in Bangor!

In addition to updating their tobacco policy, Shaw House in Bangor is now committed to providing tobacco screening for all youth, as well as brief interventions including referrals to the Maine Quitlink.



Shaw House in Bangor's mission is to engage youth who are homeless, or at-risk of becoming homeless. Since 1991, Shaw House has supported youth in achieving stability and a viable plan for the future. They do so by providing a safe, stable environment, access to essential services, supportive adult connections, and advocacy toward changes that address the needs of homeless youth.

Sean Scovil, a staff member at Shaw House, responded to an email sent by Bangor District Tobacco Prevention staff in the spring of 2020 as part of an outreach effort regarding the potential impact COVID-19 might have on the youth they serve who vape or use tobacco products. He was very interested in supporting youth who were struggling with smoking. Youth who go to Shaw House are required to stay for at least 24 hours to attend a life skills training and to explore available resources. Staff saw that youth were struggling with nicotine withdrawal symptoms. In addition, youth explained that they did not have the resources to purchase cigarettes, so were sharing 'stubbies' - discarded cigarette butts found on the sidewalk. With concern about COVID-19 risk, as well as youth dealing with withdrawal symptoms, Sean was anxious to make some changes.

As a result of working with our Bangor Prevention staff, two of Shaw House's employees have now completed the Tobacco Intervention Basic Skills Training (one of whom participated in the Behavioral Health-focused version).

As of summer 2020, part of their intake protocol now includes trained staff completing tobacco screening for all youth and providing brief interventions when needed. Brief Interventions include a referral to evidence based tobacco treatment, such as a referral to Maine QuitLink's expanded services for a 'quit your way' option.

Persistence and Patience Pave the Way...

2017: Bangor Prevention staff met with Shaw House staff to share resources and offer support. They were not ready at that time to make changes.

2018: Bangor Prevention staff met again with new Shaw House staff. Now under a new fiscal sponsor, they were interested in moving forward, but needed more time before any tobacco policy updates or treatment referrals got underway.

2019: Bangor Prevention staff reached out via email and phone, with no readiness at that time from Shaw House.

2020: Shaw House responds to Bangor Prevention staff email and are ready to make changes!



*"By connecting youth with a primary care provider or the Maine Quitlink and access to NRT, Shaw House can support a healthier future for young people they serve."
- Bonnie Irwin, Bangor Tobacco Prevention Specialist*



“Studies have shown that nearly 70% of homeless youth in the US smoke combustible tobacco”.

(Wenzel, Tucker, Golinelli, Green, & Zhou, 2010),

Last year, 163 youth received housing and other basic needs support from Shaw House. With a high percentage of homeless youth dependent on nicotine, Shaw House is now positioned to provide tobacco treatment support and referral, including an environment that encourages a tobacco-free life.

Shaw House tobacco users are now less likely to be impacted by the following statistic:

Tobacco use remains the leading cause of death and disease in this country with over 443,000 deaths per year, almost half of those from smokers with mental illness. According to SAMHSA, children who experience homelessness have significantly higher rates of emotional, behavioral, and immediate and long-term health problems.

Impact:

Shaw House leadership and staff understand the challenges facing homeless youth. By changing their intake protocols and providing not only tobacco screening, but brief intervention and referral as well, Shaw House is supporting youth toward increased healthy living. Safe and stable housing, educational and behavioral health resources and now tobacco treatment options, will assist at-risk youth toward a healthier and improved future.

Next Steps

While Shaw House’s newly updated Tobacco Policy now includes



tobacco free campus for all residents and visitors, Bangor Prevention Staff will continue to work with Shaw House annually toward their eventual goal of becoming a completely tobacco free campus for all.

Contact Information

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References

Breathe Easy Maine, <https://breathe easymaine.org/>

ScienceDirect

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352853219302482>

(Wenzel, Tucker, Golinelli, Green, & Zhou, 2010), which is almost three times higher than the national estimate for the general population of **youth** (Baer et al., 2003, Bousman et al., 2005, Micch et al., 2019, Wenzel et al., 2010).

SAMHSA: <https://www.samhsa.gov/homelessness-programs-resources/hpr-resources/youth>

