

WISDOM REACHES FOR RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

Say "yes" approach gets ACAP a solid partnership with MSAD #33 school.



"The Pioneer", Wisdom's School Mascot.

"I just need to thank you all for all of your efforts. You all made this day a great success for the students and staff. Thank you all again You all are the best and we look forward to coordinating more wellness-oriented events in the future...."

-Jo-Anne O'leary
Wisdom School Nurse

"It is our job to continue to support schools, meeting their needs as they come and continuing to build relationships that will hopefully lead to successful smoke-free policy implementation.

-Chastity Holland
Aroostook County Action Program DTTP

The Obstacle

Over the course of the last two years, contact with schools at the district level has continued to result in low success, even establishing partnerships proved to have much difficulty. Staying ahead of changes in Covid precautions and safety protocols remains the most pressing matter in ensuring the safety of the students. The question arises, how do we continue to support schools and build stronger relationships when the content of our specific service delivery model does not meet the primary focus of the district?

Summary

Meet them at their needs. The recent relationship between Aroostook County Action Program and Maine School Administrative District #33 began in March of this year when the school expressed interest in a youth mattering presentation for the middle school students. ACAP assisted in a wellness day for the students which allowed the tobacco prevention team to connect with the school administration. The principal and guidance counselor selected specific partnership goals with targets in policy assistance, youth mattering, classroom education and a very high interest in restorative practices for both the school as a whole.

How Did We Get There?

In April Renee Bragdon with 5210 approached Chastity about doing prevention presentations for the students. To provide a little background on this district, the elementary students lost their school (Dr. Levesque Elementary) last summer to a tragic fire. To support the loss, Wisdom Junior/High School in St. Agatha now houses all grades from kindergarten through twelve. Chastity and Renee worked with school nurses Jo-Anne O'Leary and Erin Beaulieu, to develop a wellness day that would bring multiple prevention groups from ACAP to the school to give a hands on learning experience. To encourage participation, the students took turns at four different stations that provided age-appropriate interactive and educational activities. The topics included communication (Breakthrough Youth), drug awareness (Drug Free Aroostook), the damage smoking and vaping does to your lungs (Commercial Tobacco Prevention) and the importance of being active (5210). The students wrapped up with mindfulness and were given important tips on oral care as they made their way back to the classrooms.



How Did We Get There? Continued.

At the end of this event, we gave partnership information to the school counselor, Tammy Lothrop and the principal of Dr. Levesque Elementary, Cheryl Hallowell. In the conversation we highlighted the different services that ACAP prevention could bring the school and stressed that our number one priority was to reduce or remove the burden put on the administration in developing comprehensive smoke-free policies and on teachers and counselors by providing the expertise on commercial tobacco education to the staff, students and their families.

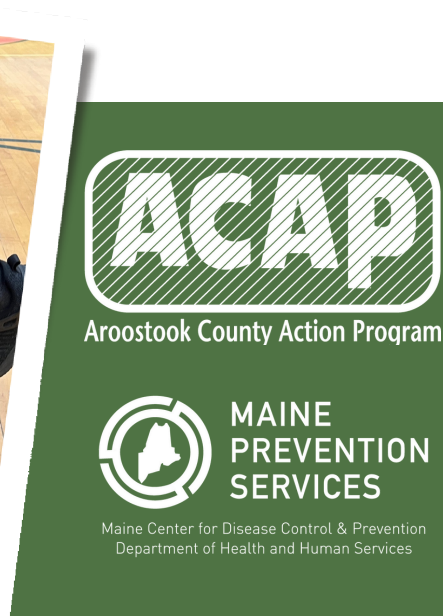
Mrs. Lothrop and Mrs. Hallowell showed high interest in restorative practices for the school as a whole, policy improvement, and learning sessions that could be provided to the school, students, staff and parents. These were added to the partnership and will be in progress through the 2022-2023 school year.

What Now?

In the coming school year ACAP and MSAD #33 will continue to collaborate to provide education for the youth, trainings to staff and support on the implementation of a new tobacco-free policy. We are looking forward to sharing the tools in our belt that will help to create a more restorative environment for the youth that attend MSAD #33 schools.

Conclusion

The connection that we have made with MSAD #33 is only the beginning. We are looking forward to the many ways that we can support the school in their needs both within and beyond our typical scope of delivery. ACAP's wrap-around service delivery model, makes it our number one priority to use our broad spectrum of services to meet as many of those needs as possible. These capabilities allow us to say yes to participating in events that don't hit our larger goals, but still to build partnerships that we know will continue to grow in the future. Wisdom Middle/High School is only one in a larger school unit that covers the entirety of the St John Valley, allowing us to roll the ball into the other schools as the time comes. As educators we want to empower students to make the safest lifestyle choices by providing hands-on prevention activities and strategies, without adding extra burden to the staff and administration. We are here to help, because together we can make a difference.



For More Information: prevention@acap-me.org Attn: Chastity Holland & Caragan Haney