



COVID Response Task Force Blue Ribbon Committee Recovery Solutions

Created to evaluate challenges and identify low-cost, high-impact recovery solutions that use ARPA monies.

The CRTF will allow the City of Portsmouth to “build a strong, resilient, and equitable recovery by making investments that support long-term growth and opportunity.”



Committee Members

- **Will Arvelo**-Executive Director of Cross Roads House
- **Kathy Beebe**-Executive Director of HAVEN
- **Linda Briolat**-Retired Portsmouth Teacher
- **Nancy Brown**-Health & Wellness Educator at Phillips Exeter Academy
- **Whitney Brown**-Manager at Safe Harbor Recovery Center of Granite Pathways
- **Amber Buttermore**-former 4th grade teacher/parent
- **Abbie Frank**-Speech Language Pathologist at Little Harbour School
- **Janet Laatsch**-CEO of Greater Seacoast Community Health
- **Laurie McIntosh**-Occupational Therapist, Assistive 3 Technology Professional
- **Lori Waltz**-Executive Director of Leadership Seacoast
- **Meme Wheeler**-Executive Director at The Chase Home in Portsmouth
- **Molly Wilson**-Pediatric Occupational Therapist
- **Karen S. Conard** - City Manager (Ex-Officio Member)



Guests for Q&A:

- **Kim McNamara, Portsmouth Health Officer**
- **Jane Ferrini, Assistant City Attorney**
- **Sean Clancy, Assistant City Manager for Economic Development**
- **Kelly Lesko, Director of Resident Services PHA**
- **Rad Nichols, Executive Director Coast Bus**
- **Patte-Anne Ardizzoni, Southern NH Community Action Program**
- **Zachary McLaughlin, Portsmouth Schools Superintendent**
- **Ellen Tully, Portsmouth Welfare Administrator**
- **Maria Reyes, Seacoast Public Health Network**



Critical Areas of Need For the Portsmouth Community Post COVID Include:

- **Transportation**
- **Mental Health**
- **Workforce Shortage**
- **Childcare**
- **Housing**
- **Substance Misuse**



Transportation

- **Problem:** lack of workforce, limited and expensive training for CDL certification, wage equity (COAST vs. Amazon), lack of access, gaps in service and reliability, cost of driver education, stress created by tardiness (school)
- **Impact on public health:** missed medical appointments, access to medicine and food diminished, effects on employment, huge domino effect on myriad aspects of work/life



Transportation

- **Potential Solutions:** sponsor scholarships/subsidies for CDL/Drivers Ed, City purchases fleet of non-CDL vehicles (how to operationalize?), ability to utilize existing fleet, retirees interested in assisting with rides, potential for discounted taxi vouchers, connection to job training programs, support marketing campaigns, work collaboratively among nonprofits to coordinate transportation needs
- **Agencies involved:** COAST, interested non-profits, Great Bay Community College, C&J, Wildcat Transit
- To Research Further: liability issues, operational logistics (who owns this?), the viability of working with the existing taxi operator



Mental Health

- **Problem:** access, lack of mental health providers, insurance coverage, transportation when telehealth is not an option, increase in need during and post-COVID, ability to resume services lost, increase in family stress levels,
- **Impact on public health:** increased depression, misuse of substances, suicidality, less productive workforce, family stress, poverty



Mental Health

- **Potential Solutions:** supporting/creating safe alternative solutions for after school, ability to bill for alternative providers (i.e. interns) in support of limited staffing, sponsor scholarships/training/incentives to build the workforce, identify online/telehealth options for those providers lacking same, support EAP programs for those organizations lacking same, fund existing agencies to run targeted programs in a group vs. individual capacity (i.e. Soul Models), support a coordination of care program for parents, offer grants to agencies that work toward these goals/solutions, add funds to already existing grant sources (i.e. Seacoast Women's Giving Circle), match funds for organizations that are fundraising for mental health
- **Agencies involved:** Seacoast Mental Health, Seacoast Women's Giving Circle, NOMI, YMCA, Greater Seacoast Community Health, Granite Pathways, Connections Peer Support, Greater Portsmouth Youth Wellness Coalition, Little League, Portsmouth Recreation, Arts in Reach, Easter Seals, PHA, New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, Soul Models



Workforce Shortage

- **Problem:** lack of affordable housing options/inventory, minimal amount of landlords participating in HUD voucher programs, limited childcare options, lack of reliable transportation, limited training opportunities
- **Impact on public health:** employee burnout and turnover, disruption of services, increased reliance on welfare, education, extracurricular activities, childcare, mental health services, housing, public services



Workforce Shortage

- **Potential Solutions:** outreach to PHS CTE Program and community colleges, recruitment of younger workers (i.e. the Flatbreads idea), engaging retirees with social responsibility influence, develop a mentorship/peer-to-peer program, compensate and support non-profits for the work they do, support training programs (CDL license scholarships, early childhood education)
- **Agencies involved:** Big Brothers/Sisters, Portsmouth High School-CTE program, Workforce Housing Coalition, apprenticeship program through community colleges, vocational rehabilitation, Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative, NH housing, PHA, Safe Harbour Recovery



Childcare

- **Problem:** families are unable to find childcare, not enough options for children under 6, shortage of childcare employees, lack of training, no head start program, not getting paid a livable wage or getting benefits, more women are being left out of the workforce
- **Impact on public health:** parents can't work, mental health -stress on families, social skills are impacted, impacts workforce, increases risk for unsupervised children



Childcare

- **Potential Solutions:** subsidize childcare for employers, provide childcare at businesses, provide partnerships with the Portsmouth High school CTE program in Early Childhood Education and Seacoast Community School or other childcare centers, create a position to coordinate childcare/after school programs/mental health services for youth
- **Agencies involved:** Portsmouth High School CTE, Community colleges, Seacoast Community School, Portsmouth Recreation Department, Portsmouth School District



Housing

- **Problem:** lack of affordable housing for individuals who are making less than \$48,000 a year, landlords choosing not to participate in subsidized housing programs
- **Impact on public health:** risk for homelessness, decrease in workforce, increase in stress and risk for mental health issues and substance misuse



Housing

- **Potential Solutions:** identify and support developers that are interested in housing vulnerable populations, educate landlords and developers about housing choice vouchers, provide temporary rental assistance, support PHA as they build housing for vulnerable populations , support programs that provide workshops about how to be a good tenant
- **Agencies involved:** Seacoast Housing Coalition, Home For All, PHA



Substance Misuse

Problem: individuals dying of drug related issues, increase in family stress and dysfunction, children who are orphaned, children become at risk and neglected, lack of treatment options and providers

Impact on public health: increases stress on support systems, COVID increased substance misuse—families are returning to use, increases childhood trauma(ACE scores) puts children at risk for using



Substance Misuse

- **Potential Solutions:** support prevention, educate caregivers and community members about ACE(adverse childhood experiences) scores and the impact they have on future health, fund programs that educate youth, fund programs that provide safe after school activities for children and teens
- **Agencies involved:** Pinetree Institute, Seacoast Mental Health, Safe Harbour Recovery Center, Haven



Recommendations Summary

- Continue meeting to discuss possible solutions
- Work with established grant making organizations
- Hold Public Forums to spread the word
- Provide marketing for these opportunities
- Support the Community Resource Network to make the website more user friendly which will allow community members to connect with local agencies and nonprofits
- Continue public conversations about the areas of need for Portsmouth to build resiliency for our community for the long term