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Press Release

DA Morrissey hosts Coalition Leaders, Safety Officials at Positive Community Norms Training



More than a dozen community substance abuse coalition leaders, police and fire personnel, and substance abuse workers from across Norfolk County were guests of District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey at the 3-day Positive Community Norms Training Institute conference held in Dedham recently.

"We are dedicated to finding what works. Public health research into what changes behavior is moving away from trying to scare young people away from bad behaviors," District Attorney Morrissey said. "What works are strategies to make it more attractive, and easier, for young people to make good choices. Healthy schools and healthy communities are built, but not on fear."



District Attorney Morrissey collaborated with one of his community partners in prevention, Organizing Against Substances in Stoughton, or OASIS, to bring Dr. Jeffrey Linkenbach and his nationally recognized seminar to Norfolk County in October.

"The problems we are seeing, like illicit substance use and impaired driving, are community problems. The solutions also have to be in the community," District Attorney Morrissey said. "The group we sponsored to attend included police, fire, school personnel, regional organizations, and youth and substance abuse specialists from Quincy to the Rhode Island line. There is a role for all of us here."



Dr. Linkenbach, a senior research scientist at Montana State University, has seen significant improvements in public safety and health through Montana's "MOST OF US" campaign. The campaign is organized around the idea that normal peer pressure can be turned around and made into a positive; the message is that while some percentage of people may smoke, drink in unsafe or illegal ways, take drugs or engage in dangerous behavior, a larger percentage does not.

"If we want health, we must promote health," and not simply point out dangers and bad outcomes, Linkenbach said. "The best way to prepare for the future is to create it."

Morrissey said that is the kind of change he is trying to foster in Norfolk County communities, where he is working to establish substance abuse coalitions in every town that does not already have one. "Dr. Linkenbach put it very succinctly: This is a process, not a program. The question is how we grow the solutions that already exist in our communities."