

From Planning to Action: Youth Mental Well-Being in Norwalk

Over the past year, youth, families, educators, service providers, and community partners came together to help shape the *Priority Plan for Youth Mental Well-Being in Norwalk*. Developed through a partnership among Compass Consulting, Positive Directions, Norwalk ACTS, and New Canaan Community Foundation, the plan reflects both community voice and local data.

The planning process engaged 10 youth and 49 adults. Participants reviewed findings from the Norwalk Youth Survey, a provider gap analysis, and community focus groups. Over four planning sessions, they identified challenges facing young people, explored opportunities for improvement, and developed a shared vision for the future.

The process resulted in six priorities for advancing youth mental well-being in Norwalk:

- Disconnected Youth
- Equity
- Peer Supports
- Stigma, Judgment, and Fear
- High-Risk Populations
- Specialized Services and Higher Levels of Care

These priorities highlight areas where partners believed greater attention, coordination, and investment could make the biggest difference for young people.

Today, the work is moving beyond planning.

Through the Social Emotional Health Initiative, Priority Implementation Teams have been formed around each of the six focus areas. These work groups include community partners, stakeholders, and residents who are helping turn the community's priorities into action.

Guided by the Social Emotional Health Leadership Team and co-chairs from across the community, the groups are meeting regularly to identify solutions, establish measurable goals, and advance the key actions outlined in the plan.

What makes this effort unique is that it continues to be driven by the people it is meant to serve. Community members helped identify the priorities. Young people shared their experiences. Families, providers, and partners contributed their perspectives. That input continues to guide the work as implementation moves forward.

The Priority Plan is intended to remain a living roadmap. As the work progresses, partners will continue to learn, adapt, and respond to community needs.

The goal is clear: to ensure that every young person in Norwalk has access to the support, resources, and opportunities they need to thrive.