



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
City of Stamford

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CITY OF STAMFORD AND THE VITA PARTNERSHIP FORM YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH ALLIANCE

Stamford, CT – The City of Stamford and the Vita Partnership, a network of Stamford’s nonprofit mental health and human services providers, have joined forces to form a Youth Mental Health Alliance (YMHA). These organizations are engaged in a data-driven, collaborative process to address the mental health issues facing our youth, which is an increasingly urgent public health issue in Stamford and across the country.

“For too long, mental health concerns have been associated with stigma and dismissed as ‘someone else’s problem’, until it happens to you or someone in your family,” said Mayor Caroline Simmons. “I am thrilled to announce the creation of the Youth Mental Health Alliance. I’m grateful that our essential human service providers have rolled up their sleeves to identify best practices and trauma-informed strategies that will improve the mental wellness of our community. This strength-based approach will help build greater understanding of the importance of youth mental wellness and facilitate a comprehensive system of intervention and support.”

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health problems among Stamford youth had been identified and our community primarily responded by increasing access to clinical care. These mental health challenges have only been exacerbated by the pandemic and the many disruptions that Stamford families face. The most common problems identified among youth are depression, anxiety, anger and trauma. Most of our youth can thrive with conventional support, however, others have experienced multiple traumas and show more severe and complex symptoms. YMHA is committed to eliminating barriers to needed care and mobilizing to ensure Stamford youth have access to all available and necessary resources. The Alliance seeks to build a comprehensive and holistic response based upon prevention, early intervention, and by engaging an array of human services, community support programs, family assistance and facilitating youth engagement in the process.

The City of Stamford Health Department is overseeing the work of the YMHA, which is co-chaired by Lorraine Olsen, Chair of the Stamford Health Commission and Michael Hernandez, Stamford Public Schools.

The YMHA Steering Committee includes Charter Oak Communities, Stamford Cradle to Career, Stamford Public Schools, Family Centers, Child Guidance Center, Kids in Crisis, Liberation Programs

and the office of Mayor Caroline Simmons. The work of YMHA is divided into three working groups which are concentrating on Mental Wellness (prevention), Continuum of Care (clinical services) and Communications (community engagement). YMHA plans to seek public and private funding sources to support this work. It will also develop a public-service campaign to raise awareness about the importance of mental wellness, its impact on our community and the many diverse roles we must assume to support it.