

Below are the responses from Kym Asam from the Howard Center.

1. What more can be done to intervene and support youth on the "fringe."

I think this is a systems issue. Schools can benefit from focusing on how to increase a sense of belonging and membership for disenfranchised students. Development of creative, alternative educational opportunities that keep kids connected. Discipline policies that include out of school suspensions exacerbate feelings of marginalization. Policies that ensure each student in the school is identified and at least two adult staff have a positive, consistent connection with students is helpful. Doing trainings on cultural reciprocity, checking biases, managing affect, etc is also helpful in raising awareness of how adult interactions magnify student's feelings of incompetency and isolation.

2. What are the causes/motivation of extreme violence?

Multiple. Media, exposure to violence through gaming, community violence, etc. It is interesting to think about how television has been long used as a medium to influence consumer behavior but there is still resistance on the part of television and gaming industries to think about the content of their media and how it impacts kids behavior and ultimate desensitization. Usually, extreme violence is impulsive, but not always. Being able to identify at risk community members (if you see something, say something) and intervene early. Motivation is usually related to feeling of hopelessness and no resolve to personal challenges.

3. Can we have more wet shelters in our area?

Seems like a legislative and philosophical issue to me. There are so many rules for people who are getting assistance (substance use, housing, state aid, etc.) that sometimes it prohibits progress. There continues to be a "not in my backyard" sentiment (as evidenced by South Burlington's response to having the methadone clinic in their community). Education, acceptance, destigmatization, testimony, etc.

4. How are we going to meet the needs of diverse cultures- people who are moving to our community?

If we are talking about refugee resettlement, community forums are the way to go. Inviting community leaders/elders to share their perspective and understand their cultural differences in order to meet their needs is critical. Accessing expertise from Refugee resettlement, Karen Fondacaro, etc. is also helpful. Basic needs remain the same – belonging, housing, food, love and community. So, checking our biases and fears is critical.

5. Can we get First Call or related contact information into every young person's smartphone? It appears this is not an option at this point.

6. How can we identify people in crisis to help them?

Again, if you see something, say something. Training and education about mental health risk and what to look for. Crisis is defined by the individual so, not to be redundant, but we have to check our own assumptions and biases about what we see to help. Many people feel suicidal behavior is “just a cry for help” and adhere to myths surrounding that issue.