

MACOMB TWP.

# Chippewa Valley coalition receives \$15,000 grant

By Nicole Tuttle

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The Chippewa Valley Coalition for Youth and Families is planning to add a new option to its toolbox of informational campaigns aimed at preventing youth addiction — a film targeting the parents of elementary school children.

The coalition's focus is to reduce and prevent youth substance use and suicide. The coalition applied for a grant from the Jamie Daniels Foundation in September and was awarded \$15,000 in late November.

The Jamie Daniels Foundation was created by Ken Daniels and Lisa Daniels-Goldman in memory of their late son, who died from an overdose at age 23 while receiving treatment for substance use disorder. The foundation supports efforts to prevent substance abuse, aid those in addiction recovery, and reduce stigma associated with substance use disorder.

Chris Perry, the executive director of the Jamie Daniels Foundation, said that the foundation makes about 10 or 12 grants per year of varying monetary amounts to groups that focus on youth substance abuse disorder and prevention.

The money granted to the coalition will be used for the professional production of a short film intended to raise youth substance use awareness among the parents of elementary school students, aiming to prevent addiction in youth before it starts.

Charlene McGunn, the coalition's executive director, said that the film will help parents recognize teachable moments with their young children on the subjects of smoking, vaping, alcohol, drug and marijuana use. She said that starting to have these discussions early on can help to prevent substance abuse by the time a student reaches high school age.

“What we really find is parents, and I understand it, they don’t think about using teachable moments. Often they don’t, with young children. Yet the children are seeing in the environment, things that normalize the use of alcohol, marijuana and other drugs,” McGunn said.

McGunn said that the short film will be particularly aimed at parents of fourth and fifth graders, not only in the Chippewa Valley Schools district but outside the district as well. Perry said that one of the things that impressed the foundation about the coalition’s grant application was that the materials created would be shared with other school districts beyond Chippewa Valley Schools.

“We have built a dissemination network across the state with agencies that focus on children and youth, and part of our application specifies that many agencies agree to disseminate this stuff,” McGunn said.

The coalition will be working with the company Mad Habit Creative to create the short film, starting in January. A draft of the approximately two-to-three-minute film will be shown to focus groups of parents prior to finalization. McGunn said that the film will help parents to understand how children might view messages about smoking, vaping, drug, alcohol and marijuana use in their environment, from billboards to social media. It will also help parents learn to start age-appropriate conversations.

The film is anticipated to be completed towards the end of May, according to McGunn.

The grant funds will also be used to create three education pieces of a theme similar to the film, for a similar audience. The materials will be for use online and for mailing pieces, which will begin to be disseminated in June and run through October.

“All of what we get out is research based. So we will incorporate up to date research into the information,” McGunn said.

The coalition is also planning to launch a series of non-grant funded one-to-two-minute videos in mid-January.

“This strategy is driven by an online survey, a coalition survey of parents. We had 1,400 district parents of elementary students fill out the survey,” McGunn said.

These videos will provide parenting tips for the parents of elementary school-aged children. The tips will cover a broad range of topics, from the need for young children to get enough sleep to limiting screen time.

“Our direction really is to provide parents with research-based information they might consider in parenting children,” McGunn said.