

# Decisions At Every Turn Coalition Community Newsletter

*A community resource supporting Ashland's young people & their support networks to create a safe & healthy Ashland for all.*



Spring  
2025



## A letter to the Ashland community:

Whether you have been an avid reader of the Decisions at Every Turn Coalition Community Newsletter since the Fall 2014 inaugural issue or this is your first time picking up this valuable prevention resource, you will notice that reflection, appreciation and action are common themes.

Through 30 issues over ten years, I have had the pleasure of welcoming you to explore prevention; highlighted dedicated community partners who prioritize youth health and wellbeing; provided hundreds of resources to prevent and reduce youth substance use and to promote positive youth health; and shared data about the wellness status of Ashland youth and offered strategies to continue to support those amazing areas of strength, as well as strategies to address behaviors where kids & teens need the most support.

Beyond the pages of this newsletter I've built relationships with hundreds of community residents, youth and adult coalition members, municipal and school staff, regional prevention advocates, public and political figures, and experts in the fields of positive youth development, family communication, mental health & wellness and substance use prevention, addiction and treatment. Through these incredible relationships, as a coalition and a community, we have worked together to foster a culture that understands the negative impact that any substance use - alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, vaping, opioids and other prescription drugs - can have on the social, emotional, physical and mental wellness of kids and teens.

I've seen the transition and transformation from grassroots prevention nurtured by dedicated and passionate DAET volunteers to the full integration of the prevention framework into Ashland's vision for community health through the creation of the Department of Prevention & Human Services. It has been remarkable to witness the evolution and would not have been possible without the steadfast belief by each of you that prevention works.

It has been my greatest privilege to serve this community. I will take every lesson, every experience, every challenge and every success with me to my new home in Connecticut. I hope that wherever I land, the people and the community will be as welcoming as Ashland. I do know this ... prevention will always guide my view of the world. I truly believe that we can all shape the future for our kids, our families and our communities when we take action and invest in prevention. Your community has made that investment. I invite you to be a part of that investment. Volunteer with DAET - join our email list - participate in a community event - attend a workshop - visit our website for resources - have conversations with family, friends and neighbors about ways to promote safe spaces for youth - stay connected through social media - advocate for policies that protect youth - prioritize prevention. Take action.

In health & wellness,  
~Kristin French  
Director of Prevention & Human Services

## Upcoming Events

**May 2025-**  
Mental Health  
Awareness Month

**June 2025-**  
PRIDE Month

**August 2025-**  
Aug. 31- International  
Overdose Awareness  
Day

**September 2025-**  
National Recovery  
Month  
Back to School

## **In this Newsletter:**

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**Visit our Website-**  
[AshlandDecisions.org](http://AshlandDecisions.org)

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Decisions At Every Turn

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[@AshlandDecisions](https://www.instagram.com/AshlandDecisions)

## MY REFLECTIONS FROM MY TIME AS THE DAET INTERN

In September, I wrote an introduction letter in the Fall quarterly newsletter about my initial aspirations and goals for this role as a prevention intern. In that opening letter, I reflected on the idea of intentionality and how it's the cornerstone of the DAET's work. I remember being excited about the health-outcome-focused work that I was going to do, even though I was still unsure of the full scope of what prevention work meant. I was eager to learn and grow as a social worker. Now eight months into this work and only a couple of weeks away from my Master of Social Work graduation, I understand why intentionality resonated so deeply with me then and why it will always be central to prevention initiatives.

Prevention isn't just what we do; it's about how we think. It's a mindset that recognizes that in every role – from community leaders making large-scale changes, to volunteers at the Food Pantry, to an intern learning about the field– we all can play a role in shaping the beliefs, behaviors, and culture we want to see in the future. It means engaging in the hard conversations, to challenge what we see, and making the effort to intentionally promote healthy choices.

One of the favorite moments of my internship perfectly illustrates this idea. A few weeks ago, Eliza and I were hosting a lunch engagement for students at Ashland High School. We wanted to invite students to think critically about prevention and changes they want to see in Ashland. Two students approached the table, and one expressed a desire to prevent narcissism in society while the other emphasized the importance of promoting sympathy. In this interaction, we assisted the students in connecting the two concepts– creating a moment where, in real time, they realized the importance of intentional conversations. It was a moment that may seem so simple to others, but it was special to see how those students' eyes lit up when they had made that connection and it highlighted the importance of engaging in prevention based discussions that challenge perspectives and inspire change based action.

As I transition from being a Social Work intern to a social work professional, I challenge myself – *and I challenge you*– to think critically about our communities. We must be willing to step outside our comfort zone, speak up when we see injustices, and analyze the inequalities around us to create meaningful change. However, this work doesn't have to be done in solitude. Prevention is best fostered in groups when we work together in our shared values, to talk about what we see. This can take a variety of forms – attending a book read with other caregivers, volunteering with the Holiday Program and chatting with volunteers, and sitting one on one with your child and talking with them about their experiences at school. Prevention means intentionally engaging in these conversations and finding others with that passion for change as well. As we move forward, I encourage you to find a prevention focused role in our community, whatever that may be. It is through collective efforts that we create a community rooted in care, justice, and intentionality.

Sincerely,  
Aniah Weaks, MSW

**YOUR  
MIND  
MATTERS**



**MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH  
AWARENESS MONTH**

*TO LEARN MORE, VISIT...*

**ASHLANDMASS.COM  
KEYWORD: MENTAL  
HEALTH MONTH 2025**

# MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

## COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES FOR OUR ASHLAND RESIDENTS

**CALL TO TALK  
CRISIS LIFELINE,  
AVAILABLE 24/7  
(508)-532-2255**

**SUICIDE  
PREVENTION  
LIFELINE  
1-(800)-273-8255**

**ELDER AT RISK  
HOTLINE  
1-(800)-922-2275**

**CONTACT  
EMOTIONAL  
LISTENING HELPLINE  
1-(800)-932-4616**

**NATIONAL  
DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE HOTLINE  
1-(800)-799-7233**

**SAFE-LINK  
DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE SHELTER  
(877)-785-2020**

**EATING DISORDER  
ASSOCIATION  
(617)-558-1881**

**LGBTQ+ HELPLINE  
(617)-267-9001**

**MASS COUNCIL  
ON COMPULSIVE  
GAMBLING  
(617)-426-4554**

**METROWEST  
LEGAL SERVICES  
(508)-620-1830**

**THE RIGHT TO  
IMMIGRATION  
INSTITUTE  
(781)-209-0183**

**MASSHIRE  
CAREER  
GUIDANCE  
(508)-861-7993**

## PROM, GRADUATION AND ALCOHOL: WHAT'S A PARENT TO DO?

It's prom season, and soon it will be graduation season as well — a time of celebration and milestones where adolescence and adulthood converge. With the celebrations, however, comes the temptation to include alcohol. And parents often fall victim to the bait, just like the teens they are obliged to protect.

To keep your kids, and yourself, safe from legal consequences, not to mention the hassle and heartache of much worse things that can happen when minors consume alcohol, here are some important tips for parents and kids.

### **Know the rules.**

In Massachusetts, social host laws restrict adults from furnishing alcohol to minors that are not their own children on their own property. That means if you're hosting a party where alcohol is served to kids other than your own, you are violating the law. Even if you didn't provide the alcohol, if you don't take steps to stop it, you're still liable.

### **Understand the penalties for underage drinking.**

In Massachusetts, furnishing alcohol to a minor carries potential criminal penalties of a fine up to \$2,000 and/or imprisonment for up to one year. Additionally, individuals who violate the law could face civil liability, such as lawsuits for injuries caused by the minor. Far worse, should a child be injured or killed as a result of drinking at your party, you could carry the emotional consequences for the rest of your life.

### **Be the nerdy parent.**

If your child is going to a party, call the other parents and find out what their plans are. Ask if they will be there the entire time and request they let you know if the kids leave to go someplace else. With your own child, set a strict curfew and require her to check in with you at that time. A face-to-face greeting when she comes home will cue you to whether she has been drinking.

### **Avoid "open parties."**

Have a guest list and stick to it. Don't allow your child to send invitations via social media or another means where it can be disseminated to a large group of people. If you do invite a large number of guests, welcome other parents to help chaperone.

### **Emphasize "don't drink and drive."**

Let your child know that your top priority is their health and well-being, and that they can call you at any time to come get them and drive them home safely. Emphasize that nothing is more important than not drinking and driving and not getting in a car with someone under the influence.

# Recognizing Alcohol Awareness Month

Alcohol Awareness Month is recognized every April to increase public awareness and understanding, reduce stigma and encourage local communities to focus on alcoholism and alcohol-related issues.

These resources are available to support those Ashland residents in need of getting the alcohol related support they deserve.

**MA Bureau of Substance Use Services Helpline**  
(800)-327-5050

**Massachusetts Organization for Addiction Recovery (MOAR)**  
(617)-423-6627

## Section 35 Helpline (844)-843-6221

\*Section 35 refers to a law, Massachusetts General Law chapter 123, section 35, that allows a court to order the involuntary commitment and treatment of individuals with alcohol or substance use disorders who pose a likelihood of serious harm to themselves or others.

**Alcohol Anonymous (AA) meetings in Ashland**



**Al-Anon of MA**  
Support for caregivers of those with an Alcohol Use Disorder  
(508)-366-0556



**Adcare Treatment Center**  
1-(800)-252-6465



**Genesis Counseling**  
(508)-620-2992  
**Spectrum Outpatient Program**  
1-(800)-464-9555 x1161  
**Spectrum Detox Center**  
1-(800)-366-7732  
**Spectrum Clinical Stabilization Services**  
1-(800)-366-7732



## 2025 Stakeholder Retreat- February 2025

Thank you to our amazing Decisions At Every Turn community stakeholders for joining us this past February for our annual stakeholder retreat. The over 30 attendees included community leaders, school administrators, recovery professionals, educators, and community volunteers. Attendees received a crash course in prevention frameworks with the hopes the work gets carried back into our community engagements.

**A special thank you goes out to Jules at Dulce d' Leche Cafe for hosting our event!**