

## **Marlborough: Schools to apply for opioid prevention grant**

### **Wednesday**

Posted Dec 14, 2016 at 6:34 PM

Updated Dec 14, 2016 at 6:34 PM

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MARLBOROUGH - Aiming to educate students on the dangers of opioid use and addiction, school officials are applying for a state youth opioid prevention grant to fund a life skills program and a part-time drug and alcohol counselor.

As the opioid epidemic continues to ravage the state and country, the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office will award \$500,000 in grants to support school-based prevention education initiatives to address opioid dependence and addiction.

Marc Kerble, executive director of secondary education, told school officials Tuesday the district is seeking a \$23,694 grant to bring the Botvin Life Skills program and curriculum to more than 1,500 students in grades 4-8. The program helps teaches students the necessary skills to resist peer pressure to smoke, drink and use drugs, as well as enable them to cope with anxiety and increase their knowledge of the consequences of substance abuse.

The students would participate in 15 weekly life skills sessions as part of the district's wellness program, said Kerble.

An adult life skills program and parent training will compliment the student program. Kerble said the workshops will focus on opioid addiction and substance abuse.

The grant funds would also allow the district to hire a part-time licensed alcohol and drug counselor that would primarily be stationed at Hildreth School and Marlborough High School. The counselor will work with at-risk students. All students suspended for being under the influence of illegal substances must see the counselor as a condition of re-entry to the school, said Kerble.

Any potential grant funds would be used during the 2017-2018 school year, according to Kerble.

"If we didn't have the need, we wouldn't apply," he said. "It's going on in Marlborough. It's going on in all communities."

Mayor Arthur Vigeant agreed, saying it is crucial to get drug prevention education programs into the schools to teach students the dangers of substance abuse at a young age.

"I'm glad to see we're jumping in with both feet," said Vigeant, who also serves as chairman of the School Committee. "It's a real issue here as well as everywhere else."

The grant applications are due Friday.

Along with requesting grant funding, the district is hosting an opioid awareness event Jan. 11 at 6 p.m. at Whitcomb Middle School that will feature a screening of the movie 'If Only' and a panel discussion.

Attendees are asked to sign up in advance of the event by visiting .....

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