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Coalitions adjust to funding realities .

Raymond Coalition for Youth:

Wins a \$125,000 Drug Free Communities grant through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration.

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RAYMOND — A federal grant is allowing a local coalition working to prevent youth alcohol and other drug use to continue its mission.

But a loss in some state funding means some local coalitions are left relying on volunteers and their communities to stay alive.

The Raymond Coalition for Youth was one of four New Hampshire organizations to receive a \$125,000 Drug Free Communities grant through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration.

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For RCYF, this offsets a loss in Strategic Prevention Framework money from the state that recently ran out after three years.

Celeste Clark, executive director of the Raymond Coalition for Youth, said they were able to show that they have been effective in reducing alcohol and other drug use among area youth.

The percentage of students reporting use of cocaine, heroin and methamphetamines almost reversed in a two-year period. But use of marijuana is on a negative trajectory, Youth Risk Behavior Survey results show.

In 2009, 28.7 percent of Raymond students reported using marijuana in the last 30 days compared to the state average of 24.1 percent the same year.

“Our target goals are to continue the coalition efforts by bringing the community together to work on continuing to bring down the numbers,” Clark said.

The coalition offers a range of prevention programs in conjunction with local law enforcement, the school district and other area agencies.

Local coalitions really took a hit with the loss of state funding, Clark said, but 10 regional

coalitions set up under the Strategic Prevention Framework are still active.

“New Hampshire was broken down into 10 regional geographic areas and each of those regions were provided significant funding for prevention framework. So what that meant, was that every community across New Hampshire had money specifically focused for substance abuse prevention work,” said Sandi Rubchinuk, regional coordinator with Allies in Substance Abuse Prevention. “Now we have a lot less funding to work with, so a lot of those local coalitions that were receiving funding, that ended.”

Rubchinuk said everybody knew that the three-year grant would run out, and sustainability had to be a focus throughout the process.

But some younger coalitions, including one in Newmarket and Epping, will have to continue their efforts without paid staff.

Raymond Police Chief David Salois is actively involved with RCYF and said funding is key to maintaining the level of programming offered, but Rubchinuk said that energy developed over the last three years is keeping the momentum going.

“What we are seeing happen is that a lot of the community connections that happened, a lot of the resources that were developed through this process, a lot of the planning that happened is now being embraced by these volunteer coalition leaders and community members and they are seeking ways to continue the momentum,” Sandi said. At a regional level, Allies in Substance Abuse prevention will be working to increase messaging throughout the region, linking prevention, treatment and recovery resources throughout the region and will act as a primary resource for data collection and assessment.

“With the direction the feds are moving with prevention, treatment and recovery, I think there is going to be a lot more focus on regional systems as a vehicle for funding,” Rubchinuk said.