

TOWN OF WESTWOOD

Committed to Service

Principal, Westwood High School
SEAN BEVAN

Chief, Westwood Police Dept.
JEFFREY SILVA

December 13, 2013

SUBJECT: Change in WPD practice in processing underage drinking may impact high school athletics suspensions

Dear school community members,

The core principle of the Memorandum of Agreement between the Westwood Public Schools and the Westwood Police Department is a shared commitment to student health and safety. To that end, we would like to share with the high school community a change in practice that will improve how we coordinate our efforts to ensure student health and safety, both in and out of school: effective immediately, when responding to calls reporting underage drinking, WPD officers may provide teens an opportunity to use a breathalyzer to prove that they have not consumed alcohol and, thus, have not violated the MIAA rule governing student-athletes' alcohol use.

As you know, police staff and school staff interact on various student-related issues. At the high school level, the police department is critical in assisting administrators in processing violations of the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association's (MIAA) chemical health policy, which penalizes student-athletes for the consumption and/or possession of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

Since the majority of chemical health violations happen off school grounds and not during school hours, police officers (rather than school staff) are frequently the first and only adults to deal with minors in the presence of drugs or alcohol. In those cases, the police record the names of all students in attendance at parties to which they are called and pass this information along to high school administrators who use the information to process MIAA chemical health violations. Drawing sensible, fair, and accurate conclusions about who was or was not consuming alcohol at these parties is often difficult for administrators who base their conclusions on the best information available: names of attendees and evidence of alcohol and/or drugs found at the scene.

In an effort to encourage students to be role models of healthy living, the Westwood Police Department and the Westwood Public Schools will enact a change in practice to how police respond to calls of minors engaging in alcohol use: police officers responding to reports of minors engaging in alcohol use may offer a portable breath test to any young person who requests to take it if the police supervisor deems it feasible to do so. In providing this option, WPD staff could be able, for the first time, to provide school staff with more reliable, accurate, and actionable information about students who were engaged in alcohol consumption.

In no instance shall any student be compelled to take such a portable breath test. Moreover, in no instance will any breath test result be used against any student in any criminal proceeding. If such a test

is taken however, while not eliminating a student's liability for being in possession of any alcoholic beverages, it can afford them the opportunity to obtain independent evidence that they have not consumed any alcoholic beverages, and as such, have not violated the consumption component of the MIAA chemical health policy. This change will not alter how police staff and high school administrators process students to be found in possession of alcohol, drugs or other controlled substances. Those students remain subject both to legal consequences and consequences of violating the MIAA chemical health policy.

Our combined hope is that this change will compel young people to make responsible decisions about whether they partake in alcohol or other drugs and discourage dangerous behavior such as fleeing from the police. We are confident that this change will encourage students to make healthy decisions when they find themselves in a situation where drugs or alcohol are present.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sean Bevan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sean" being more prominent than the last name "Bevan".

Sean Bevan
Principal, Westwood High School

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeffrey Silva". The signature is stylized and cursive, with the first name "Jeffrey" being more prominent than the last name "Silva".

Jeffrey Silva
Chief, Westwood Police Department