

Sexual Health Programming and Planning



Implementing a Peer Led Program

In preparing peers to teach, there are strategies advisors should utilize to ensure a successful program.

1) Recruitment: Recruit peer educators from a broad base of potential candidates. Consider students currently in leadership roles, but look also for those who are dedicated to the program's goals and objectives, yet may not have the sexual health or leadership background. Some of the most effective peer educators may not initially appear to be ideal candidates. Successful recruiters will search out students, rather than simply expecting them to respond to a flyer or notice. Enlist professors and other campus staff to make recommendations and to publicize the program.

2) Incentives: Decide what incentives the program will provide for the peer educators. Some programs offer class credit or volunteer service hours. Local merchants may be willing to donate shirts, snacks, or discount coupons. Other programs build peer educator wages into their budgets.

A 3) Training: Provide sufficient training for the peer educators. Skills development is as crucial as knowledge. Proper training empowers peer educators to recognize when to refer a peer to a professional. The training should model the supportive and interactive techniques that peer educators themselves will use. Successful programs will have ongoing training for the peer educators, as well as times to practice existing skills and to develop new ones.

Are you too busy to train your peer educators yourself? Does the idea of bringing in someone from the outside to conduct training for your campus sound appealing? You can utilize the convenient and very affordable option of having The BACCHUS Network™ come to your campus to train your students using our Certified Peer Education program (CPE). A BACCHUS staff member will work with you every step of the way to plan the CPE training on your campus. For less than the cost of a speaker who presents for an hour, you can have this 12-hour training that empowers your peer students and campus to commit to healthy and safe lifestyle choices. Please contact us for more information at (303) 871-0901.

4) Peer Facilitation: Select a curriculum to maximize interactive and experiential learning. Peer education works best when students work with one another to learn new things or to develop new skills. Peer educators should be trained in facilitating and processing as well as in giving clear directions. Peer educators gain ownership of the program when they play a role in deciding which activities to use or in designing new ways to present the information.

5) Collaborate: Remember that research shows peer education to be most effective when part of a comprehensive initiative. Link peer educators with the campus health center, local clinics, community agencies, and programs with similar goals. Ensure that peer educators know when and where to refer another student.

6) Monitor: Monitor the peer educators' work. After the initial training, peer educators will need ongoing supervision of their work, training and future training. Peer educators should keep a log of their activities. By monitoring these logs, advisors will be able to highlight skills or knowledge that need strengthening. Feedback will also help the students become more skillful and effective educators.

7) Support: Provide ongoing encouragement and support. Peer educators work hard and their work is not always easy. Positive feedback and support will help keep them involved. As their advisor or group president, encourage the group to support each other and providing occasional incentives, such as pizza parties, small trips, or end of the year awards.

8) Retain: Expect attrition and have a formal structure for recruiting and training new peer educators on an annual or bi-annual. Students have many competing interests; some may decide they do not enjoy being peer educators. Exit interviews will help gauge whether they are leaving for personal or programmatic reasons. Involving current peer educators in the recruitment and training of new peer educators will also empower them and help them develop new skills.

9) Evaluate: Provide opportunities for peer educators to give feedback about the program, its activities, and their own performance. The peer educators often sense what they need to become more effective and to enjoy their work more. In addition, incorporate formal data collection

10) Promote the Program: Develop literature showcasing services and highlighting accomplishments. Positive stories from the peer educators and feedback from workshop participants will enliven data-based reports. These materials will increase visibility and encourage potential funders to invest in the peer education program.

Source

Norman, J. (1998). Components of promising peer led sexual health programs. *Advocates for Youth*. Retrieved October 29, 2009, from http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/index2.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1294&Itemid=177&pop=1&page=0

Note: Many of these topics have been breakout sessions at our annual Advisor's Conference. Some presentations are posted in the Advisor's Corner of bacchusnetwork.org and are a helpful resource!

