

BEST PRACTICES FOR EDUCATING YOUTH ABOUT DRUG USE IN PETERBOROUGH



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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

1. Host agency
2. Background of the project
3. The Project/ Importance
4. Results
5. Discussion/ Interesting revelations



KEY TERMS

- **Youth-** ages 11-17 for this project
- **Harm reduction-** strategies aimed to reduce negative consequences associated with drug use
- **Natural highs-**an excited state not due to ingestion of a drug or another substance
- **Resilience-** the ability to recover quickly or bounce back from disruptive changes, without acting in dysfunctional ways
- **Protective factors-** factors that promote resilience
- **Risk factors-** factors that compromise resilience
- **Strength based programs-** based on identifying the strengths of individuals

HOST AGENCY

Peterborough Police Service

- Community Service Unit
 - 4 officers
 - Drug education in local schools



BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

- Peterborough agencies have limited opportunities to collaborate
- Peterborough agencies have a desire to ensure best practices are applied
- Why is this research important to the Peterborough Police Service?



Peterborough Youth
Services



A United Way Agency



Peterborough
Public Health

JohnHoward
SOCIETY OF PETERBOROUGH



Kawartha Pine Ridge
District School Board

THE PROJECT – RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What does the evidence say about strength based, harm reduction, and or peer driven drug education when working with youth?
2. What tools and methods are indicated as being most effective to deliver this message?
3. What, if any, evidence exists that indicates the importance of police involvement in delivering this message?
4. What are the drug education requirements of current elementary and high school curricula?

THE PROJECT – RESEARCH QUESTIONS

5. What strategies are local agencies using in their youth focused drug education and what resources are they using?
6. What resources would local agencies like to have available to them as part of their education strategies?
7. What local agencies are doing drug education in schools?

RESULTS – STRENGTH-BASED DRUG EDUCATION

- Strength-based programs are more effective than programs on knowledge
- 1. Teaching youth to be resilient
 - Reducing risk factors and strengthening protective factors
- 2. Developing natural highs
 - Teens in Iceland
 - **Youth get addicted to changes in brain chemistry**
 - Plan created to decrease substance use based on the idea that different classes provide alterations in youth's brain chemistry
 - Youth in Europe program



HARM REDUCTION DRUG EDUCATION

- Harm reduction methods are effective at reaching youth who are already using drugs and does not increase drug use among non-users
- Best practice to prevent the transmission of blood-borne infections, promote safer drug use, increase access to social services and prevent overdoses
- Peers are essential to harm reduction initiatives

PEER-DRIVEN DRUG EDUCATION

- Peer led programs can change behaviour and improve knowledge
- Drug prevention programs that incorporate a peer-led component receive better outcomes
- Drug education programs delivered by mental health professionals and counsellors produce the largest effects followed by peers and then teachers
- Youth feel more comfortable talking to their peers
- Peers should be trained in their roles and supervised

RESULTS – ONLINE AND VIDEO RESOURCES



- Effective, low cost option for drug education that can target a vast number of youth
- ~95% of 12-17 year olds use the Internet and 81% use social media
- Effective in reducing drug use and associated risks
- Computers accelerate learning
- May be easier and can make youth feel more comfortable
- Video resources can be effective but can't be altered to the individual

RESULTS – THE IMPORTANCE OF POLICE INVOLVEMENT

- D.A.R.E shows youth have more trust in police after participating
- Youth can have negative views of police
- Police officers delivering drug education indicated as having “no or negative prevention outcomes”
- 2018 research from Carleton University on school resource officers employed by Peel Regional Police
 - 9 million dollars a year!!!

RESULTS – THE IMPORTANCE OF POLICE INVOLVEMENT

- 1. The presence of an officer in the school makes it easier for students to see the police as someone they can talk to
=reduced stigma
- 2. Ability to interact with police non-confrontationally
= increased levels of trust
- 3. The officers can educate students about drug use
- Youth who have more exposure to the police in a non-confrontational environment are more likely to form a positive relationship with them and see beyond the common stereotypes they attach to police

DISCUSSION- THE IMPORTANCE OF POLICE INVOLVEMENT

- Police may not be trusted by youth
- Peel Regional Police study by Carleton University
- Is police presence in schools viewed as a form of relationship and community building or intimidation?
- Having an officer come into the school frequently, would help youth get to know them and become more comfortable and trusting around them
- When youth only see a police officer in their school arresting a classmate in the hallway, youth may start to view police as an enemy

RESULTS- SURVEYS

- All of the agencies are currently using harm reduction education strategies (Q5)
- The majority of agencies are using resiliency and healthier high strategies (Q5)
- Local agencies are using a variety of different resources but all would like to have more resources available to them (Q6)
 - Online and workshop resources were most frequently requested

DISCUSSION- SURVEY RESULTS

- Agencies rate the effectiveness of their current youth drug education strategies 2.70 stars out of 5
- Reviewing and revising program content:
 - 10% answered that they review and revise about every three years
 - 10% answered they were not sure
 - 30% answered that they have no fixed schedule
 - 30% answered that it depends on time and resources
 - Only 20% answered that they review and revise after every presentation
- Could the low effectiveness of agencies youth drug education be related to the fact that these agencies are not reviewing and revising their programs frequently?

DISCUSSION- SURVEY RESULTS

- Agencies are not using approaches in their youth drug education that they believe to have the biggest impact on youth
 - 13% answered that they believe that a peer-to-peer approach would have the biggest impact on youth, but only 5 % are currently using a peer-to-peer approach
- Maybe local agencies don't have the resources they need to implement the approaches they believe to have the biggest impact?

INTERESTING REVELATION

- Different developmental stages offer different opportunities for drug prevention
- Peer- driven drug education depends on the developmental stages of the individuals in the target group
 - Grades 8 and 9; peer education is preferred
 - Peers not as influential as teachers in elementary school

YOUR PROBABLY WONDERING.... “WHAT IS THE BEST PRACTICE?”

- Evidence regarding the effectiveness of strategies and programs to prevent substance use for youth is mixed, and there remain gaps in the evidence
- Two current trends:
 - 1. Shifting away from abstinence and corrective approaches to harm prevention approaches
 - 2. Recognizing and addressing the multiple protective and risk factors, which contribute to youths' substance use attitudes and behaviours
- Collaboration of approaches
- Remember your target group

THANK YOU!