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For more information, visit:

PartySmart.org/community/drugTalks.html



School & Community Drug Talks

Why is it facilitated by a student instead of a professional?

Studies have proven the benefits of peer health education.

- Evaluation of a peer-led drug abuse risk reduction project for runaway and homeless youth found that peer-led groups were more effective than adult-led and nonintervention groups. (Fors, 1995)
- A study of Australian school-based drug education found many common principles of effective school-based drug education, one of which was the use of peer leaders (Midford, 2002).
- Interactive peer-led programs are significantly more effective than non-interactive, teacher-led programs in preventing drug use (Black et al., 1998).
- Among drug education, peer pro-

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grams were found to be more effective and peer-led programs correlated with more knowledge, less alcohol and marijuana use, and lower rates of smoking. There have been contradictory reports as well, citing that peer led programs had no effect, or a negative effect (Black et al., 2004).

- A strong correlation has been found between effective peer-led programs and well-defined peer-leader training. (Black et al., 2004)
- Adolescents have been found to be more likely to engage in interactive discussion after peer-counseled HIV education, than adult health care providers. Peer-led groups produced greater attitude changes in teens perception of risk than adult-led groups (Mason, 2003).
- Peer leaders offer several benefits including cost savings, ability to model appropriate behaviors outside of the classroom and greater social credibility among students. (Black et al., 2004)

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Young people are part of a unique subculture with common norms, language, experience and needs and therefore, peers have a more important role in their lives.

- High school students spend twice as much time with peers as they spend with adults, including their parents (Brown, 1990).
- One stage of psychosocial development for adolescence is establishing autonomy. Autonomous teens have gained the ability to make and follow through with their own decisions, live by their own set of principles of right and wrong, and have become less emotionally dependent on parents (Huebner, 2000).
- Numerous studies have shown that their peers influence youth's health behaviors (Mason, 2003).

Peer-led health education has been utilized and promoted by reputable sources.

- The CDC and the Academy for Educational Development list HIV prevention interventions that are science-based and proven effective. One such intervention is the Mpowerment Project in which the major educational element is a

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peer-led discussion group (AED, 2003).

- National Peer Helping Association
- Natural Helpers
- Advocates for Youth (Mason, 2003).

Peer interactions facilitate learning.

- Allows students to learn from each other (Van Ments, 1990).
- Peer interactions have been shown to facilitate critical thinking, impulse control, communication skills, empathy, sharing, helping and comforting. All of these skills and qualities can be related to drug use, misuse and abuse (Black et al., 2004).

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