Integrating Peer Educators in Campus Suicide Prevention Efforts: Key Considerations for Effective Practice

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Learning Objectives

- Identify and understand the ways that key elements of evidence-based and effective peer-facilitated interventions addressing suicide risk among college students have been developed and implemented based on theory and best practices in the field.

- Identify the ways in which students have been recruited, engaged and involved in the development, implementation, and evaluation of evidence-based and effective peer-facilitated interventions.

- Identify the ways in which the effectiveness of evidence-based peer education interventions addressing suicide risk are evaluated, both in regard to short-term goals and objectives and long-term indices, such as changes in patterns of help-seeking, utilization of campus mental health services, and changes in campus culture toward a norm of help-seeking.
Peer influence is a key factor in determining the behavior of college students.

College students regard their peers as a credible and trusted source of information (National College Health Assessment, 2000).

Studies have shown that peers can be as effective as professionals in delivering alcohol interventions to college students (Fromme & Corbin, 2004).
About Our Programs
Peer Education at the University at Albany, SUMY
University at Albany Profile

- University Center within 64-campus SUNY System
- Urban Setting
- Research University
- NCAA Division I
- Students:
  - Undergraduates - 13,246
  - Graduate Students - 4,956
- Faculty: 967
- Employees: 4,197
- Degree Programs:
  - Undergraduate - 61
  - Masters - 89
  - Doctorate - 39
The Middle Earth Program: Background and Service Model
Program Description

- Provide hotline peer assistance and peer education services to support academic success and personal and social growth and development

- Enhance responsiveness and sensitivity to diversity issues on and off campus
Mission

“STUDENTS HELPING STUDENTS”
History

- Begun in 1970 by students as alternative to traditional counseling services

- Peer education component begun in 1980

- Currently the peer assistance arm of UAlbany Counseling Center “feeder service” to professional counseling
Program Components

- Hotline
- Peer Education
- Staff Training and Staff Development
- Peer Career Advising
Hotline Service

- Open noon-midnight, Mon.-Fri. & 24 hours on weekends
- Over 1,600 contacts per year
- New Web-based hotline service: Middle Earth Café
- Serves campus and community
- Only hotline of its type in Albany, NY
Peer Education Program

- Provides peer education workshops for campus and community
- Coordinates *Sexuality Week* and other campus-wide theme weeks (Sexual Assault Awareness month activities)
- Sponsors the *Middle Earth Players*, a campus theater group
- Authors *Middle Earth Roots* help column and has done a radio talk show on WCDB 90.9FM
Staff Training Program

- Trains undergraduate students in hotline counseling, peer education, and important campus issues
- Offers academic course credit (6 courses)
- Prepares students for careers in the helping/human services fields
Program Staff

- Director (Licensed Psychologist)
- Supervisors (Staff Psychologists)
- Undergraduate Student Officers/Executive Board
- 2 Psychology Interns
- 2 Graduate Assistants
- 85 Hotline Counselors
- 30 Peer Educators
- 45 Trainees
Marketing

- Weekly article in Student Newspaper: Albany Student Press
- Information exhibits
- Facebook ads
- Fliers, posters, and table tents
- Mass emails
- Giveaways
- Student nominations
- Middle Earth Website
Recruitment

- Seeking nominations from faculty and staff
- Information exhibits
- Facebook ads
- Fliers, posters, and table tents
- Mass emails to all undergraduates
- Announcements in classrooms
- General interest meetings
- Middle Earth Website
Peer Education at the University of North Carolina Greensboro
UNCG profile

- Part of the 17 campus UNC system
- Urban Setting
- Research University
- NCAA Division I
- Students:
  - Undergraduates - 14,310
  - Graduate Students - 3,087
- Faculty: 1,065
- Employees: 4,197
- Degree Programs:
  - Undergraduate - 100
  - Masters - 61
  - Doctorate - 26
UNCG Peer Education: Background and Service Model
Program Description

- Encourage community engagement and participation of students in developing a sense of efficacy in order to be role models and advocates for healthy behavior for the campus community.

- To engage students in dialogue around difficult topics in order to foster a more open and inclusive campus environment.
The peer education program seeks to train student leaders to empower and engage the campus community. Through outreach and advocacy peer educators help to make UNCG a healthier and safer environment for all students.

Motto: **Lead. Empower. Advocate.**
History

- Began in 1990 as a means of extending the programing of the health education programs

- Moved from programming model to social justice and advocacy model in 2005

- Currently the program helps to extend the outreach, program development and advocacy of The Wellness Center
Program Components

- Peer Education
- Staff Development and Training
Peer Education

- Provides outreach programs to various groups on campus
- Assist with marketing, tabling, etc.
- Coordinates awareness weeks
- Currently has reached a total of 2,500 students through 40 programs.
- Provides advocacy work through *Toilet Talk* program and newspaper articles on topics related to health
Staff Training

- Prepares students from various fields in helping skills
- Training in peer education/social justice/advocacy
- Course credit provided (2 courses = 6 credit hours)
Program Staff

- Coordinator (Health Educator)
- 3 Asst. Coordinators (Health Educators)
- 1 Graduate Assistant
- 30 Peer Educators
- 15 Trainees
Marketing

- Information exhibits
- Facebook ads
- Fliers and posters
- Mass emails
- Giveaways
- Student word of mouth
- Peer Education Website
Recruitment

- Nominations from faculty and staff
- Informational flyer and advising information to academic advisors
- Information exhibits
- Facebook ads
- Fliers, posters, and table tents
- Mass emails to all undergraduates
- Announcements in classrooms
- General interest meetings
- Peer Education Website
Taking the Next Step

Key Considerations For Effective Practice
What to expect!

In this section we will:

- Examine points to consider in peer education program development
- Discuss development initiators and barriers for peer education programs
- Provide for discussion time on each of these points with participants
- Introduce logic models
- Work with participants to develop logic models for their programs (new or existing)
Consideration #1: Focus of Services

- What do you think of when someone says ‘Peer Education Program’?
- What do you want your peer education program to focus on?
- What programs will it include?
- What are some of the most important traits that a peer educator should have?
Consideration #2: Staffing and Resources

- Who will serve as the peer education program director? How much time will that individual devote to running the program?

- How many hours will the program operate? How many students will be needed to operate the program, and what will be their time commitment?

- Where will the program be located? Who will supply the furniture for the office? How will the phone system work?

- How much funding and other resources will the program need to operate?
Consideration #3: Training and Supervision

- What will be the focus of our peer education program?
- What training model shall we use? How will the training program be structured?
- What will be the training contract with students (volunteer basis, course credit, money)?
- What is our mechanism for ongoing supervision of students?
Consideration #4: Recruitment & Retention

- How will we recruit students for my peer education program?
- What qualifications should we look for?
- How should we conduct my application process?
- How can we motivate and reward our Peer Educator/Mentor undergraduate students once they become a part of the program?
- How should we address issues of performance and discipline in our program?
Consideration #5: Marketing the Program

- How will we market our program?
- Who will fund our marketing efforts?
- Can we partner with other campus groups, offices, or community agencies to help advertise our programs?
- How can our own students serve as ambassadors for our program?
- How can we work with our campus and community media offices to advertise our services?
Consideration #6: Liability Issues

- Does our program have clear protocols addressing how to respond to situations that are urgent or life-threatening, such as sexual assault, suicide or homicide risk?

- Does our hotline program have a mental health backup system staffed by a licensed mental health professional or agency in place to respond to urgent and emergency situations?

- Do referral networks with community agencies exist for times in which our program is not open, and are these advertised?

- Does our university have a document/contract specifying who accepts the liability for the program?

- Is there a malpractice policy in place for our program?
What mechanisms do we have in place to track and monitor the course of contacts to our peer education program? How are these records kept secure and confidential?

What mechanisms do we have in place to track the performance of our undergraduate peer educators/mentors?

Do we have templates to produce annual reports for our program, highlighting data on effectiveness?

Do we have a “brag document” or organizational resume that we can use to let people know of our accomplishments and successes?
Introduction to Logic Models

- A picture of your program: what you are putting into the program, what you are doing, and what you are trying to achieve
- Clarifies the strategy underlying your program
- Builds common understanding, especially about the relationship between actions and results
- Communicates what your program is (and is not) about
- Forms a basis for evaluation
**Logic Model**

*Program Goal*: overall aim or intended impact

- **Resources**: The inputs dedicated to or consumed by the program
- **Activities**: The actions that the program takes to achieve desired outcomes
- **Outputs**: The measurable products of a program’s activities
- **Outcomes**: The benefits to clients, communities, systems, or organizations

**How?**

**Why? So what?**
If - Then

Resources

Certain resources are needed to run your program

Activities

IF you have access to them, THEN you can accomplish your activities

Outputs

IF you can accomplish these activities THEN you will have delivered the services you planned

Outcomes

IF you have delivered the services as planned THEN there will be benefits for clients, communities, systems or organizations
YACWA Peer Project PROGRAM LOGIC MODEL

Project goal: to establish an ongoing presence of sexually transmitted infection (STI) and blood-borne virus (BBV) information and education in the WA youth sector by development and implementation of effective and sustainable youth peer education programs.

Inputs
- Time: Project staff time, Reference Group, Youth Workers, Peer educators
- Funding
- Venue hire
- Catering
- Travel expenditure
- Administration
- Incentives
- Resources - PE
- Resources - FEs

Establish Reference Group
- Literature review
- Networking partnerships and integration strategies
- YW Training - training committees, curriculum development, regular refresher/feedback training sessions
- Engage management of each agency in capacity building strategies
- Formative research conducted for each agency
- Support YW to develop policies and procedures relating to their programs
- Support YW to set up evaluation systems

Youth Participation / Action Research strategies
- Peer Educator training - knowledge, skills and personal development
- Explore the role of ICT (Information Communication Technology) within peer influence programs, to educate young people about STIRVs

 Outputs
- Development of six STI/BBV sustainable peer education programs
- A locally developed peer education training curriculum for youth workers
- 15 Youth Workers trained and skilled
- 40 youth peer educators trained
- Publication of Project Report
- Youth Sector peer education programs
- Recommendations for evaluation tools for STI/BBV peer education programs
- 2 presentations to the Youth Sector
- 1x monthly e-newsletter to the youth sector

Outcomes/Impact
- Short term
  - Increased confidence and competence of youth workers to develop, implement and evaluate STI/BBV peer education programs
  - Increased organisational capacity of trial agencies to respond to young people’s STI/BBV needs
  - Increased capacity of peer educators
  - Knowledge, confidence, self-esteem, skills to adopt healthy STI/BBV behaviours and attitudes and to influence their peers to do the same
- Medium term
  - Project Goal (above)
  - Increased capacity of the WA Youth Sector to respond to young peoples’ STI and BBV health needs
  - Increased access to STI/BBV support services for young people
  - Increased number of youth-sector agencies developing STI/BBV peer education programs

Long Term
- Reduced STI/BBV risk-taking behaviours
- Reduced rates of STIs and BBVs in young people
- Safe and respectful youth peer cultures

Assumptions/Theoretical Underpinning
- The theoretical base
  - The practice of peer education is based on a number of theories, including:
    - Social Cognitive theory
    - Diffusion of Innovations theory
    - Theory of participatory education
    - IMR model: information, motivation, behavioural skills, and resources
    - Social Ecological model for health promotion
    - Theory of Reasoned Action

Situation
- Young people in peer groups who access youth services
- Experiencing a range of issues and support needs
- Poor access to health services

Health Problem
- STI/BBV risk taking, poor knowledge, self-esteem, confidence, communication and social skills, problem-solving and coping skills, optimism, positive role models, help-seeking, gender influences, peer/social norms

External Factors
- Parents
- Schools
- Community
- Policies
- Media
- Geographic location
- Gender & power influences
- Culture / Religion
Contact Information

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