Addressing Substance Abuse Prevention through an Empowerment Approach: Ohio’s Youth-Led Prevention Initiative

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Ohio Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Alcohol

- 30% of high school students reported having at least one drink of alcohol within the past month.
- 38% reported they usually got alcohol from someone who gave it to them in the past 30 days.

Illegal Drug Use

- Fewer students are reporting cocaine use and prescription drug abuse from 2011.
- Marijuana use remains a problem for Ohio high school students.
- 20% of students reported being offered, sold, or given illegal drugs on school property.
Ohio Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Mental Health
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among youth ages 15-19.
- 14% reported they had seriously considered suicide within the past year.
- 6% reported attempting suicide.
- 26% reported feeling so sad or hopeless they stopped doing usual activities.

Violence
- 14% reported carrying a weapon to school in the past month.
- 20% reported being in a physical fight during the past 12 months.
- 21% were bullied on school property in the past year.
- 15% reported being bullied electronically.

Source: 2013 Ohio Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)
Children develop social skills, improve academic performance, and establish strong relationships with adults.

Higher academic performance and self-esteem, and participation in sports is linked to higher social competence.

Sports participation is also linked with better health and lower likelihood of obesity.

Safe, enriching environments to grow and develop skills outside of school and can provide youth with a sense of accomplishment.

Provide a safe space for adolescents to congregate.

Peer-to-peer relationships formed are as critical to adolescents’ overall health and well-being as the presence of supportive adults and information and resources.
Risk and Protective Factors

Individual risk factors by increasing the individual protective factors for a young person.

Bullying, academic failure, association with deviant peers, norms/laws favoring antisocial behaviors, substance abuse is often linked primarily with neighborhoods and schools.

Youth-Led Programs can take traditional after school programs one step further by addressing those community level risk factors such as substance abuse.
What is Youth-Led Programming?
Call to Action

“It’s not just about coming together, it’s about having an impact.”

-Ms. Karen Pittman, Co-Founder, President and CEO, Forum for Youth Investment
Embrace young people as resources not as a collection of problems which need to be “fixed.”

Engage young people in a community-based process to address substance abuse and mental health issues.

Community service, youth advisory boards, youth in governance, and youth-led programs.
Cornerstones of Youth-Led Programs

- Peer Prevention
- Service Learning
- Positive Youth Development
- Youth Empowerment
- Youth Organizing
What are Youth-Led Programs?

Youth-Led Programs are NOT:

- Adults telling youth: “Don’t use drugs.”
- The “token” youth at the table.
- Inviting youth to an activity.
- One time social events
- “Smoke & mirrors” for the program’s public image
- Youth doing all the “grunt” work
- An absence of adult involvement
- Just doing everything youth want to do
- Adults providing programming “**FOR**” and “**TO**” youth
What are Youth-Led Programs?

Youth-Led Programs ARE:

• Youth hearing directly from their peers about how to handle issues.

• Youth given a voice in planning, decision-making, implementation, evaluation, and recognition processes.

• Youth involvement in the entire prevention process.
Benefit of Youth-Led Programming
Why Youth-Led Programs?

• YLP represents a sound investment through meaningful youth involvement in community prevention efforts.
• YLP is a substance abuse prevention program.
• YLP is a comprehensive approach to addressing the emotional and behavioral health of youth and young adults while creating community change.
Youth-Led Programming

• Is an effective way of sharing knowledge.
• Is credible because it is based on real experiences.
• Is a good way of communicating ideas.
• Encourages a stable peer network.
• Can protect students from being victimized or bullied.
• Encourages strong interpersonal skills
• Enables students to maintain healthy relationships
Overarching Goal of YLP in Ohio

Young people will engage in the SPF to create and implement a strategic plan that uses evidence-based strategies to create community-level change.
Two Underpinning Frameworks


The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the United States Department of Health and Human Services funds the Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant (SPF SIG).
Youth Empowerment
Youth Empowerment

• Building young people’s skills so they can participate in social and political affairs that are important to them.
  ➢ **Key**: Allowing authentic opportunities for youth to participate in decision-making

• As a result, youth feel like they are able to influence the social and political systems that affect their lives.
Benefits of Youth-led Programming

For the youth involved:

- Positive youth development
  - Leadership skills
  - Planning skills
  - Social competence
  - Positive values
  - Problem-solving skills
  - Reinforces healthy choices
- Youth empowerment
- Positive peer & adult interactions
- Youth become part of a stable peer network
Benefits of Youth-led Programming

For the community:

– Healthy messages are promoted to youth through the most effective channel: *their* peers
– Positive contributions by youth to the community
– Misperceptions of the norm are corrected
Youth-Led Programs in Your Community

• Do you have youth-led programs in your community?
• How can you find out?
• Some ways to support local youth-led programs:
  – Engage the youth in your work
  – Provide financial resources to YLP to implement their strategic plan
  – Support YLP efforts through participation and recognition of their success
Ohio Youth-Led Prevention Network

• Build upon and expand partnerships between youth-led programs across systems, across the state.
• Statewide Youth Council
• Develop and strengthen Ohio’s youth-led efforts by getting to outcomes
Resources & Opportunities

• 6th Annual We Are The Majority Rally
• Adult Leader Learning Collaborative
• Regional Learning Communities
• OYLPN Youth Council
• DFAA/OYLPN as a resource
Questions
For more information on OYLPN...

Ohio Youth-Led Prevention Network
https://www.drugfreeactionalliance.org/oylpn
Twitter: @BeTheMajority
Pinterest: InTheMajority
Instagram: bethemajority
For more information on Ohio Adult Allies...

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ALLIES

https://www.ohio.edu/voinovichschool/services/ohio-adult-allies.cfm

Twitter: @YL_AdultAllies #AdultAllies
Instagram: YL_AdultAllies
YouTube: Ohio Adult Allies
Contact Information

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