

Health Promotion and Prevention Theories and Models

This section provides a brief overview of key theories and strategies that we can use to encourage healthy sexual practices. Each concept is one part of the overall, comprehensive approach for prevention. Some models may already be in use on your campus, and others may be worth exploring and discussing with your peer education group. By reviewing these strategies along with those already in place on your campus, you will have the opportunity to build and strengthen your prevention work.

Harm Reduction

Harm reduction is one strategy campuses may use to encourage safer sex. In this model of prevention, campuses encourage students to lower the risks associated with sexual activity including intercourse, oral sex and anal sex. For some students this means choosing to abstain; for others, it means employing the following lower risk guidelines:

- Using a condom during vaginal, oral and anal sex
- Using a dental dam during oral sex
- Using a water-based lubricant to reduce chances of a condom tear
- Not engaging in sexual activity while intoxicated

Social Norms

Social Norms is a strategy that campuses may use to encourage healthy sexual behaviors. This marketing strategy highlights healthy student choices instead of highlighting a problem behavior. In a non-judgmental way, campaign materials speak about behavior of the majority of students.

For those of you who have not used a Social Norms approach before, it does not have to be complicated or intimidating. Here are some very simple steps that will help you understand how you can develop a Social Norms campaign:

Baseline: Collect baseline data that will show you actual and perceived norms. For example, when working on Sexual Responsibility Week you might want to collect actual percentage of students always using a condom. You will also want to collect what percentage the general student body thinks that students always use a condom. You can collect data on several health behaviors, so this is a good time to learn about which behaviors have large discrepancies between perceived behavior and actual behavior.

Intervention: Expose the student body to data about actual behaviors, not the perceived behaviors. This is when you would develop and distribute marketing materials (posters, websites, postcards, palm cards, incentives) with the information collected from the baseline data. For example you might want to use this Social Norms message, "XX% of ABC University students always use a condom during sexual activity."

Results: After you have exposed the student body to the Social Norms message you measure results. Generally speaking, there are two different ways to measure the effectiveness of your message. You may either measure a reduction in the health behavior or whether students have an accurate perception of the health behavior.

When utilizing the Social Norms model, consider the following:

- Will you use campus data or other data?
- Is the data you are using in line with the behavior you want to encourage?
- Stay in the positive. For example, "Most students..."

Perkins, H.W. (2003). *The Social norms approach to preventing school and college age substance abuse*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Survey Tools

The foundation for many health promotion programs and campaigns, including Social Norms, is data. But where and how do you find data on your own campus? Below are options for collecting information about health behaviors in general and sexual behavior in particular.

PingMyHealth

PingMyHealth is a free survey tool from The BACCHUS Network™ and Klein Buendel, Inc. PingMyHealth asks users short questions about various aspects of health. The assessment is different from other surveys in one major aspect: PingMyHealth provides instant feedback and suggestions for health improvement to users. In order to collect data, campuses must register by sending an email to: info@pingmyhealth.org.

National College Health Assessment

The American College Health Association offers a comprehensive health survey in the fall and spring of each academic year. Campuses will need to plan ahead for proper implementation of the survey, including funding, human subjects / Internal Review Board (IRB) approval, sampling methods, and timeframe for surveying. For more information, visit <http://www.acha-ncha.org/getstarted.html>

Past years' national data is available for download at: http://www.acha-ncha.org/pubs_rpts.html

CDC Science-Based Approaches

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has created several criteria that comprise a science-based approach for addressing sexual health issues, including STI and pregnancy prevention.

Science-based approaches include the following:

- Use demographic, epidemiological, and social science research to identify populations at risk of early pregnancy and STIs, and to identify the risk and protective factors for those populations.
- Use health behavior or health education theory for selecting risk and protective factors that will be addressed by the program and will guide the selection of intervention activities.
- Use a logic model to link risk and protective factors with program strategies and outcomes.
- Select, adapting if necessary, and implement programs that are either science-based or promising.
- Conduct process and outcome evaluation of the implemented program and modifying approach based on results.

Source

Centers For Disease Control and Prevention. (2009, May 17). Adolescent reproductive health: promoting science based approaches. Retrieved November 6, 2009 from <http://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/AdolescentReproHealth/DefineScienceApproach.htm>