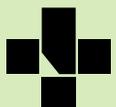


Peer Leadership:

**A guide to implementing
school-based peer
leadership programs**

EXPANDED VERSION



**Alberta Health
Services**

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
What is peer leadership?	1
Peer leaders	1
What the program will look like.	2
The benefits of peer leadership in the prevention of substance abuse and gambling problems	2
The role of peer leadership programs in the prevention of substance abuse and gambling problems.	3
What to consider when implementing peer leadership.	4
Your role as a facilitator	4
Support.	4
Representing your student body.	6
Recruitment	6
Selecting your team	8
Samples.	9
Team building.	14
How to build a team	14
Activities to use in team building	15
Project planning	21
Best practices in project planning	21
Training: Understanding the basics of youth substance use and gambling	21
Needs assessment.	22
Setting goals.	24
Action plan	25
Evaluation.	27
Sample agendas: team building day and planning day.	30
Resources	32



Introduction

This resource was created to provide junior and senior high school staff with a guide to implement a peer leadership program among students. Peer leadership helps students gain important skills to become role models within their schools and communities. It can be a part of a comprehensive approach to the prevention of substance abuse and gambling problems in your school.

This resource is available in two formats. The print format provides an overview of peer leadership program development. The expanded version, available online, goes more in depth into the details of peer leadership and the actual planning and implementing of a program. Here on the web, sample documents, such as letters, will be available in Microsoft Word document format so that you can go right in and adapt these forms for your personal program.

In this document, “substances” include alcohol, tobacco and all other drugs, including prescription medication, over-the-counter drugs and illegal drugs.

What is peer leadership?

Students can improve the quality of life at their own school through influencing, supporting and being role models to their peers. This is peer leadership. Students involved in peer leadership programs help their peers by taking an active role in the school to make it a better place. These students are dedicated to creating and supporting healthy, safe and welcoming schools.

A peer leadership program can help students, especially those who might not otherwise be in a leadership role, gain important skills to become role models within their schools and communities. In some cases, peer leadership can change the status quo around bullying and other school conflicts. Throughout this document, however, we will focus on the importance of peer leadership as part of a comprehensive approach to the prevention of substance abuse and gambling problems among students.

An effective peer leadership program strives to do the following:

- **create a forum** that provides students opportunities to develop, refine and practice leadership skills (Tiven, 2002)
- **empower students** to use their leadership skills to affect positive change in their school (Tiven, 2002)
- **invest** in future leaders (Tiven, 2002)
- **increase awareness** of substance use, substance abuse and gambling within the school setting

Peer leaders

A peer leadership team is a group of students who are committed to affecting positive change within their school environment. These students are dedicated to creating and supporting healthy, safe and welcoming schools. In a peer leadership program, students are given the opportunity to develop skills so they can make positive change and be better able to influence peer attitudes and behaviours.

Peer leaders will also develop skills that will help them to choose, implement and direct school-based projects, activities and initiatives that will focus on the prevention of substance abuse and gambling problems. Through this, these students will become leaders of the future.

Peer leaders will

- **challenge** the norms
- **inspire** a shared vision
- **commit** to be positive role models
- **enable** others to act

What the program will look like

Peer leadership will look different at every school. Every school will identify specific needs, and will develop specific approaches to meeting those needs. What will look the same, though, is that a peer leadership program will be part of each school's planning and commitment to create a safe and supportive environment that will provide students with opportunities to develop and practice leadership skills.

Within the program, your peer leadership team will create a number of projects, including activities and initiatives. These can range from informal interventions (students committed to being friendly and approachable in the hallways) to formal interventions (students creating a social-marketing campaign that provides accurate statistics about substance use and abuse). In this tool kit we will provide examples of and tips about the basics of peer leadership projects and how the projects can be used to help with the prevention of substance abuse and gambling problems.

The benefits of peer leadership in the prevention of substance abuse and gambling problems

Substance use and abuse and gambling problems impact all students. The Alberta Youth Experience Survey (TAYES) 2005 found that the majority of adolescents are not participating in these activities. However, a significant proportion are participating in behaviours that put them at risk for developing a problem.

According to research, these are the top factors that help protect youth from abusing substances and developing gambling problems (AADAC, 2002):

1. parental monitoring
2. social skills
3. availability of, and participation in, pro-social activities
4. good school grades
5. connection to school

By using peer leadership to affect the overall environment of your school, you are increasing protective factors not only for those directly involved in peer leadership, but for your school population as a whole.

The heart of peer leadership is that it is student driven. To sustain this, it is critical that you and other committed staff members are invested in the approach and purpose of peer leadership.

Pro-social activities are social, recreational and school activities that are carried out to foster school-bonding, build self-esteem and connect youth to each other, their school and healthy lifestyles.

The role of peer leadership programs in the prevention of substance abuse and gambling problems

Effective substance abuse and problem gambling prevention (AADAC, 2002):

- increases those factors that protect youth from abusing substances or developing a gambling problem
- reduces those factors that put youth at risk of using and abusing substances or developing a gambling problem
- fosters resiliency

Through a peer leadership program, you can accomplish an effective prevention program using two approaches:

1. Focus on staying healthy and choosing not to use substances and not to participate in gambling. This approach would use awareness activities.
2. Focus on providing positive alternatives without any mention of substance use or gambling. This approach would use pro-social activities.

Ideally, your peer leadership team should try to have a mixture of both types (AADAC, 2004).

In a school setting, prevention activities and initiatives should include a mixture of the following elements, all of which could be both awareness and pro-social focused (AADAC, 2007):

- **in-class learning activities** that are grade appropriate and aligned with the Alberta Education curriculum
- **out-of-class learning activities** that enhance the overall school environment and promote resiliency (for example, intramural activities)
- **role models and mentors** who offer students their time, support and experience to build on personal strengths and learning opportunities
- **information and awareness programs** that reach students, parents and teachers to increase their understanding of important issues
- **web-based information** that is relevant, comprehensive and readable, and includes interactive content for students, parents and teachers
- **consultation** with addictions specialists (such as counsellors) to facilitate the development of policies and practices that deal with students at risk of developing substance abuse and gambling problems

Resiliency is a youth's ability to bounce back from difficult circumstances.

Peer leadership also benefits students and staff by creating an environment that fosters positive student-to-student relationships and positive student-to-staff relationships.

What to consider when implementing peer leadership

When beginning a peer leadership program, it is important to consider

- your role as a facilitator
- how to gain support for the program
- representing your student body
- how to recruit and select your team
- how to maintain enthusiasm and involvement

This section goes in-depth into these areas. This information will support you to implement a peer leadership program in your school.

Your role as a facilitator

As the facilitator of a peer leadership program, you will be engaged in a balancing act. The integrity of the program lies in your ability to guide projects and maintain them to be led, driven and organized by students. Other key responsibilities will include providing students with feedback and suggestions, and guiding students to learn from both their successes and challenges (AADAC, 1996).

Characteristics of an effective facilitator

There are some characteristics that help people to be effective and successful facilitators. One that is especially important is believing that youth are valuable members of society. As we said before, youth can be powerful agents of change, especially when adults empower, coach and advocate for them.

To be successful, youth need facilitators who are

- aware of the important issues facing students
- prepared to provide students with opportunities to learn, develop and practice skills to help overcome these issues
- committed to providing a place where young people feel safe to learn about, discuss and organize change around these issues

In addition to understanding the importance of youth, effective facilitators also understand the difficult balance between their role as facilitator, mentor and role model.

Support

In the context of a peer leadership program, support means many things. The peer leadership team will need the support of the school, of course: teachers, administration, students and parents. The program will also benefit from the support of the local libraries, businesses and recreational facilities, all of which you can consider part of your school community. Because peer leadership programs vary in cost, resources and time requirements, you will benefit from depending on these other organizations as resources. In the planning stages of your program, it is important to be conscious of these details so they don't become stumbling blocks later on (AADAC, 1996).

Effective facilitators understand that, while boundaries are important, those that are too strict can stifle voice and creativity of the youth involved. Balance between creativity and boundaries is a key component of inspiring youth involvement.

Gaining Supporters

School communities are made up of many different people: students, teachers, counsellors, parents, administration staff, local libraries, businesses and recreational facilities. All of these people have different roles, responsibilities and interests, but they can all support your program. When developing a peer leadership program, it is important to engage all of these supports. By doing this, you will be building a broad base of support for the activities of your peer leadership program. Plus, having a conscious and deliberate plan of ongoing communication within your school will help to ensure the success of your program (AADAC, 1996).

You will need to secure some support, such as from teachers and administration staff, even before you begin recruiting. Support from local businesses can be gained at anytime in the process of building your program.

Below are a few ideas to gain support for your program. At the end of this section is a sample letter introducing your program to, and asking for support from, potential supporters.

Tip: Creating buzz, put it in writing

- Run a feature in a parent newsletter, and include a summary of the peer leadership program in student Day-timers.
- Provide potential supporters in your school and community with a written explanation (such as a handout) of the goals and benefits of a peer leadership program.
- Prepare a memo about the program for your colleagues.
- Prepare a presentation about peer leadership programs for interested groups.
- Have your local newspaper run a short article on the “new” peer leadership program. Include testimonials from supporters and from people who are already part of a peer leadership program.
- Keep all messages short, upbeat, and to the point.

Tip: Choose the easiest path, start with a sure thing

- Personally contact those people you know will support a peer leadership program; ask them to involve others.
- Partner or connect to other peer leadership programs in your community. They can be sources of experience and information. Ask them to come to your school to talk about their experiences.
- Have peer leaders provide presentations about the peer leadership program to members of the school community.
- Consider concerns people might have about creating or supporting a peer leadership program and be ready to respond. Some concerns might be “It takes too much time,” “It costs too much,” or “I’ve never done something like this before.”

The success of peer leaders in bringing about positive change rests heavily on the level of support they have from their school and community environment (Tiven, 2002)

Representing your student body

An important component of building an effective peer leadership team is to have representation from a variety of different peer groups. School leadership opportunities are often held by a small group of select students. Although these students may be able to effectively influence a portion of the student population, there are many groups of students with whom they may have little, if any, influence. It is important that you consider all students for your peer leadership team. Students reside in many different groups and cliques, and many may never join a club, play sports or inhabit the mainstream of school life. These students, though, can still have the ability to influence the thinking and actions of many peers in their social circles.

Effective student leadership skills include (Tiven, 2002)

- ability to influence others
- ability to encourage others to establish and achieve goals
- empathy toward the experiences and ideas of others
- sense of purpose, direction and vision for the group
- willingness to take risks in the face of challenges

Recruitment

As mentioned, your peer leadership team should be representative of the student body. In addition to having students from different cliques and social groups, leadership teams should reflect differences in gender, religion, ethnicity and abilities. If students are convinced the team consists of a sampling of their peers, the ability of the program to influence them will be stronger than if the group is made up of students from the same social group.

Finding an ideal team size

You know your students and school environment best; when determining the ideal team size, you will need to consider what you want to get done and how many students you need to do it. Additionally, consider the following questions:

- How large is your student body? The larger the student body, the more team members required for the group to be effective.
- How many students can you effectively work with throughout the year? The more activities you plan, the more supervision you will require. If you have other adult facilitators, you can supervise more peer leaders.
- How many students can you effectively work with in your training sessions?

New teams find that anywhere from 10 to 14 team members works well: there are enough people to interact with during training, but not too many to work with during activities (AADAC, 1996). If you feel that this is not a representative number, and if you have a lot of adult facilitators, maybe multiple groups are an option.

Recruitment processes

Once you have determined how many team members you will need, you can begin the recruitment process. There are four different recruitment processes, each with its own pros and cons. Because of this, it's a good idea to use a combination of

the following processes. This will make your recruitment more successful and will help you to recruit a team that is representative of your student body, and thus able to influence the greatest number of students.

1. **Volunteer:** One way to recruit students is by asking them to volunteer for the group. By volunteering, participating students have a high level of commitment to the goals and purposes of peer leadership. It is helpful to host an information session for all students, provide information about the goals, purposes and expectations of a peer leadership team and have an opportunity to sign up for the program right there. Please note that by using this method as your only recruitment process, you will miss those students who don't typically volunteer for school groups.
2. **Recommendations of others:** Often people know someone who would be a great peer leader and team member. Ask students, teachers, counsellors or administrators to complete a nomination form. Invite the nominees to an information meeting about peer leadership. A key consideration in this recruitment process is to encourage the nomination of students with natural leadership abilities as well as those whose leadership abilities may need to be fostered (AADAC, 1996).
3. **Application:** This process is similar to traditional job recruitment. Advertise and ask potential team members to complete an application form. Selections are then made after application screening and interviews.
4. **Use a current leadership class in the school:** Many schools have existing leadership classes; these classes have the benefit of having structured meeting times, a dedicated facilitating teacher, and previous opportunities to develop and experience a sense of teamwork. Like the volunteer process, students who are taking the leadership course may be an inaccurate representation of the entire student body. Consideration of the demographics of the students currently involved, their expectations for involvement in the program, and their willingness to open the program to additional students with non-traditional leadership skills is important in this method of recruitment.

Whether students volunteer, are recommended or apply, it can be helpful to establish a basic questionnaire about student interests, motivations and abilities. This will provide you with a method to better understand the students, and will provide them with an opportunity to reflect on their rationale for becoming involved in the program.

Sample application forms, nomination letters and other recruitment documents can be found at the end of this section.

Selecting your team

When selecting your team, it is important to give consideration to the number of team members you've decided on, as well as how each potential team member can contribute to the whole peer leadership program.

Here are three ways to select who will be part of your peer leadership team:

1. **Open to all:** Accept and train all students who choose to volunteer for the peer leadership team.
2. **Exploration:** Establish a process for potential team members to demonstrate their commitment and try out the program before being accepted as team members.
3. **Match:** Design a process through which team members are selectively chosen by facilitators or senior peer leadership team members, based on how the potential member fits with the program. Selection is similar to an employment process.

Sample acknowledgement letters, interview questionnaires and other selection-related templates can be found at the end of this section.

Maintaining momentum and enthusiasm in team members

Momentum and enthusiasm will increase as students begin to learn new skills and become meaningful participants in making decisions. Likewise, the team's sense of control and ownership for the program will increase. This development requires deliberate effort, time, patience and resources.

Here are a few ideas to maintain momentum:

- Keep your peer leaders invested in the program by keeping it fun and meaningful. It is important that students involved understand the way their program contributes to their school environment.
- Whenever possible, provide student leaders with certificates of merit, letters of reference, school credits and work experience.
- Create opportunities for team members to practice what they have learned.

However you decide to select your team, the goal is to have an invested, cross-section of students involved. If you find that you do not have equal representation of your student body, you may have to approach students individually.

Samples

Included in this section are sample recruitment and selection documents. These samples are meant as suggestions and guidelines. Please adapt them to fit your program.

Sample: Gaining support

(This sample letter can be addressed to school staff, parents or community members to gain support for your program. This letter can be altered to meet your peer leadership program's specific needs.)

Date

To Whom It May Concern,

Please allow us to introduce ourselves. We are a group of students at _____ (Junior or Senior) High School. We are committed to creating and supporting a healthy, safe and welcoming school. Our goal is to support other students, and affect positive change in our school environment. And, we believe a positive change in our school environment equals a positive change in our broader community.

We can make change by decreasing student substance use and gambling, and minimizing problems in these areas. By promoting things like parental monitoring, social skills, participation in pro-social activities, importance of good school grades and connection to the school, research shows that we can also minimize substance abuse and problem gambling. To do this, we will _____.

We are asking for your support. Research shows that the success of peer leaders in bringing about positive change rests heavily on the level of support they have from their school and community. It is our hope that you will be able to support us by contributing _____ (insert here the possible ways you would like their support, whether that includes publicity, prizes for activities, space to host an event, etc.)

If you have any further comments or questions, please do not hesitate to contact _____ at _____.

Thank you for your time and consideration of support. We look forward to working with you to make our school and community a safe and supportive place for our youth.

Sincerely,

_____ (Junior or Senior) High School peer leadership team

Sample: Student application form for peer leadership team

Name: _____

Date: _____

Grade: _____

Telephone: _____

Please answer the questions below so that we can learn why you are interested in being part of a peer leadership team.

1. How would you describe a positive school environment?

2. What do you think it means to be part of a peer leadership team?

3. Describe what you believe would be the three most important qualities of a successful peer leader?

4. Why are you interested in joining the peer leadership team?

Thanks for taking the time to consider joining the peer leadership team. Being part of the _____ (Junior or Senior) High School Peer Leadership Team means you are committed to (Tiven, 2002)

- **challenging** the norms
- **inspiring** a shared vision
- **being** a positive role model
- **enabling** others to act

Please give this form to _____ by _____. You can expect to hear back from us by _____.

If you have any questions about peer leadership or this process, please talk to _____.

Sample: Nomination form

The peer leadership team at _____ (Junior or Senior) High School is a group of committed students who support other students, and work to make positive changes at our school.

Does someone you know have these skills:

- the ability to influence others
- the ability to encourage others to establish and achieve goals
- empathy toward the experiences and ideas of others
- a willingness to take risks

If someone you know has some or all of these skills, please nominate them for this year's peer leadership team. If a student doesn't have these skills but you think they would be a great fit for the team, please recommend them still.

When selecting the team, we will be paying particular attention to those students who apply and are also recommended by one or more teachers or students. We want to recruit students who represent a cross-section of our school.

I would like to recommend the following student(s) for the peer leadership team:

Student's name	Grade	Reasons for recommendation
1		
2		
3		

Students will be asked to complete an application form and get their parent's consent. Once all the necessary information is gathered, we will interview students and then make our final selections.

Thank you for your assistance in selecting this year's peer leadership team. For more info about the team, see _____.

Sample: Letter to student nominated for the peer leadership program

Dear _____,

You have been nominated as a potential member of the school's peer leadership team. The peer leadership team is committed to creating and supporting a healthy, safe and welcoming school. Team members want to make their school a great place to be for everyone.

If you are interested in becoming a peer leadership team member, we'd like to invite you to attend a short information meeting. The details of the meeting follow.

Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

See you there!

If you are interested in being part of the peer leadership team, but are unable to attend the meeting, please see _____.

Sample: Letter to parents of successful applicant

(to be sent home with information on peer leadership)

Dear Parent or Guardian,

We are pleased to inform you that your child, _____, has been chosen to become a member of the peer leadership team. Though the peer leadership facilitators reviewed many impressive applications for the upcoming year, your child's application stood out because of his/her commitment to the school community, and his/her willingness to participate in making it a supportive and positive environment, and a better place to be.

We are looking forward to this upcoming year and are eager to participate with your child in creating a school environment we are all proud of. Below is a consent form that you are required to sign in order for your child to participate in the program.

At this time, we would like to provide information about upcoming important dates for your child.

1. A short information meeting will be held for team members and parents. Here we will talk about peer leadership and the training day. Please bring the attached parental consent form at this time. The details of the meeting are
Date: _____
Time: _____
Location: _____
2. The team training will begin with an initial training day that all team members are required to attend. (Please note, parents are not invited to this session.) This is an important event for students to get to know one another, begin planning, and learn what a peer leader is. The details of the training day are
Date: _____
Time: _____
Location: _____

On behalf of the peer leadership team, I would like to thank you for your support of _____'s participation in this program. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns about the program or the meetings.

Sincerely,

Consent Form (please sign, detach and bring to the first information meeting)

I have read the accompanying description of the peer leadership program and hereby consent to my son or daughter participating in this program.

Child's name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Team building

Having a unified team is essential to bringing students together and directing their interests toward reaching common goals. Many peer leadership program models suggest an initial training period where students and facilitators can engage in team building activities (Tiven, L., 2002).

How to build a team?

The process of building a unified team includes

1. **Getting to know each other:** It is important to get to know one another, especially since your group of students will be from a number of different cliques and friend groups. Take some time for this. Icebreakers are a great facilitation tool. The process of getting to know each other is the starting point for building trust. (Rohnke & Butler, 1995)
2. **Trust:** Building trust in relationships is gradual and occurs over time. At the end of only one team building day, you can't have built life-long trust, but you should have a team that feels comfortable sharing ideas and thoughts without fear of being laughed at or dismissed. Trust begins with the facilitator. Lead by example. Try to model behaviour that signifies trust: risk taking, speaking openly about your opinions. In addition, do not put up with behaviour that threatens to make your meeting space anything but safe. (Rohnke & Butler, 1995)
3. **Open communication:** Open communication is important for a team to be able to share viewpoints, learn from each other and each other's experiences. Communication fosters an environment where people can talk openly. Laying the groundwork for open communication will mean that later, such as during project planning, students will have the skills to hear, understand and communicate with each other through the process successfully (Rohnke & Butler, 1995).
4. **Co-operation:** The focus of co-operation is to enhance each student's ability to work as part of a team (Rohnke & Butler, 1995). It is important for students to be able to work together one-on-one and as part of the whole group. Encourage growth and success in this area.
5. **Recognizing strengths:** There are inherent strengths in all students. Sometimes it can be difficult for someone to know exactly what they bring to the table. Working through activities, such as the stepping stones activity later on, can help to develop in each student a better appreciation of what they can contribute to the team.
6. **Areas for improvement:** At the end of the day, discuss the things that went smoothly and also the things that were difficult. Talk about why some things might have been difficult. Are there alternative ways of doing those things? What are they?

Make sure that HAVING FUN remains the most important component of the day. Having fun is absolutely and completely essential! "Fun is hard to manufacture, but easy to recognize when happening" (Rohnke & Butler, 1995, p. 13).

Fun

Here are a few things to think about throughout the day to make sure FUN happens:

- keep the tone as light as possible
- ensure that there are enough breaks
- be flexible: if it looks like your audience is getting bored, they probably are
- know when to press the agenda and when to change gears

Activities to use in team building

We have provided a few examples of activities that you can use for your team building day. When choosing your activities, make sure they work toward building a unified team. The activities should also be in a sequence that complements the steps toward building a team (i.e., it would be a good idea to choose activities centred around getting to know each other before you have activities that focus on areas for improvement). You will also want to consider the size of your team, the resources available and the potential safety issues when planning.

Keep in mind that there are many different options for team building activities. These are just a few to get you started.

Activity: Getting to know one another

Where the wind blows

Objective

This activity will provide participants with an opportunity to get to know one another and have fun.

Materials

- a chair for every participant

Instructions

1. Put chairs in a circle.
2. As the leader, remove your chair and stand in the middle of the circle. Explain that this game is like musical chairs.
3. The person in the middle will share a characteristic about themselves that they think others in the team will also share (for example, liking ice cream or feeling annoyed at someone).
4. If the statement applies to those sitting, these students must get up and find another seat (and it cannot be the seat right next to them).
5. The last person standing must start a new characteristic to continue the activity.

Debrief

Facilitate a brief discussion about the characteristics shared. Isn't it interesting how many or how few you all had in common.

Many of the activities we have suggested in this section use experiential learning. Experiential learning is learning by doing, complemented with active reflection. When using this method, create situations where students are exposed to emotional, physical or mental challenges. Support students to work out these problems using new skills in a solution-oriented environment. To learn more about experiential learning, check out the website of the Association for Experiential Education: www.aee.org

Activity: Getting to know one another and working together

Group juggle

Objective

This activity will allow participants to get to know one another and have fun. It will also provide an opportunity for participants to work together and achieve a goal.

Materials

- two (or more) tennis balls for every student

Instructions

1. Students are grouped into a large circle.
2. You bring out a few tennis balls.
3. Tell the team that today they will be learning to juggle.
4. Toss one ball across the circle to one of the students while saying your own name.
5. This student will then throw the ball to another student while saying their own name, and so on until every participant has “juggled” the ball.
6. The ball is then thrown back to the you.
7. Repeat the process, adding more and more balls each time.
8. Try challenging the team to juggle the balls without dropping any. Try completing the exercise in less and less time.

Debrief

Facilitate discussion about the links of the activity to the peer leadership program and team. For example, “What worked and what didn’t work?” and “Why does this matter to our peer leadership team?”

Activity: Communication

Puzzles

Objective

Teams will put puzzles together without being able to see the picture. The puzzle pieces from different puzzles will be turned upside down and mixed up, and then distributed among tables. Teams will demonstrate effective communication and co-operation skills to overcome this challenge.

Materials

- small children's puzzles of about 15 to 24 pieces each
- prizes

Instructions

1. Before presenting this activity to the team, prepare your puzzles in the following way:
 - a) Determine how many groups by the size of your team (three to four students per group).
 - b) Mix up the pieces from all the puzzles together and give the same amount of pieces to each group. One challenge of the activity will be for the students to figure out that they have pieces from multiple puzzles.
 - c) Turn all pieces upside down so only the brown cardboard shows.
2. Tell students that they will be working in groups of three or four, and that they will be required to complete the puzzle without looking at the picture of what they are putting together.
 - a) As the teams attempt to put their puzzles together, they will begin to notice that the pieces are not fitting properly. It shouldn't take them long to realize they need to start communicating and compromising with the other teams to get the pieces they need. Let the participants struggle and then eventually come up with the solution to the challenge.
 - b) Once all teams have their puzzle completed, the activity is over.

Debrief

In debriefing, discuss the following:

- What challenges were involved in this activity (e.g., not being able to see the picture, not having the right pieces, working with the other teams to get the right pieces, even though we were competing)?
- How did your team overcome these challenges (e.g., we had to communicate with each other, co-operate with other teams, use our imagination to create the puzzle)?
- Discuss the importance of communication and co-operation as they relate to team building.

Activity: Communication

Two-way communication

Objective

This activity will review the importance of active listening, and the benefits of using two-way communication when working together.

Materials

- pieces of paper with a variety of shapes drawn on them
- blank pieces of paper
- pens

Instructions

1. Arrange the room so that two team members can sit back-to-back.
2. Facilitate discussion about the differences between one-way and two-way communication.
3. Have the teams sit back-to-back in partners. Provide one team member with a picture of different shapes that they will need to describe to their peer.
4. The objective is to have one partner explain the picture to the other partner using one-way communication, and working up to two-way communication in subsequent rounds.

Debrief

Using one-way communication, the specifics of the picture are rarely understood. Two-way communication allows for questions and clarification; therefore the outcome of explaining is more exact.

Behaviours and reactions to comment on: frustration, tolerance, reactions to being misunderstood, persistence, giving up, interrupting, problem solving and creativity.

Facilitate discussions about how the process was for students, and what the connections are between this activity and actual team communication.

Activity: Recognizing team strengths

Stepping stones

Objective

This activity is intended to create

- a challenge that the team must overcome
- awareness of individual resources, and the value of them to the team

Materials

- one 8½ x 11 inch sheet of plastic per student. Plastic must be able to be written on with felt pens (sheets of paper may be substituted for the plastic, but they have a tendency to get ripped)
- felt pens to write on the plastic with

Instructions

1. Ask each student to write on their sheet of plastic the name of one resource that they bring to the team. Resources are things such as a sense of humour, empathy, compassion for others, organizational skills, good communication skills, writing skills and athletic ability. From here on, refer to the sheets of plastic as stepping stones or resources.
2. Explain to the team that they must move from a starting point to an end point (over a distance of about 10 to 12 metres), stepping **ONLY** on stepping stones. They can step on their own and other students' stepping stones, but they cannot lose touch with their own or it will be taken away.*
3. Students are to travel across the distance stepping only on stepping stones. This means that they will also need to share their resources, especially when they have lost their own. Let them figure out solutions to the challenge on their own.
4. Hopefully this will signify that students are to use their own resource to get across the distance, while also benefiting from those brought to the group by other students.

*Note to facilitator: Each time a student loses touch with their stepping stone, **you must take it away**. They must remember to keep touching it at all times. Be vigilant. Watch for any team member losing touch with their resources.

Decide if you want to give students a practice round to get used to the rules. You might also want to have two rounds.

Debrief

In debriefing, discuss the following questions with the team:

- How did you feel about this challenge?
- What was it like to lose your resource?
- What specific resources were lost, and did that have any significance?
- How did you overcome the challenges?
- Did you have to work differently as a team when you started losing your resources?

Activity: Recognizing team strengths

Team banner

Together the team creates a banner. On the banner, each team member will somehow represent what they are willing to commit to the peer leadership team. This can be in words or a drawing or whatever they come up with. In addition, individuals can outline their hands and in each of the fingers identify a personal virtue or resource that they bring to the team.

Understanding and committing to confidentiality is another way to begin the process of building trust within your peer leadership team. Introduce the concept to the group at the beginning of your training day. Have the students brainstorm what confidentiality means to them and then, as a group, agree on a set of guidelines or rules to ensure that confidentiality is respected.

Project planning

Now that you have done some team building, you and your team are at a place to move forward to address your school's specific needs around the prevention of substance abuse and problem gambling. To do this, the following section provides suggestions for specific training and information sessions on youth substance use and gambling, and the process of planning and carrying out projects, including activities and initiatives.

Best practices in project planning (AADAC, 2007):

1. Projects have a goal of increasing the factors known to protect youth from developing substance use and gambling problems.
2. Projects have a goal of decreasing the risk factors for youth to develop substance use and gambling problems.
3. Projects are targeted at a specific group. Different approaches work better with different groups based on things like level of drug sophistication, level of use, unique community factors and demographic characteristics.
4. Projects are part of an ongoing initiative, and are of sufficient duration and intensity to make a difference.
5. Prevention projects are part of a continuum of services available to students, and include information provision, universal and targeted prevention, harm reduction and intervention strategies.
6. Projects benefit from having parents involved through parent education, and reinforcing the prevention message at home.
7. Evaluation is a key component of a prevention and early intervention program. Evaluation helps people in the school community focus their time and resources on the most effective strategies, and avoid wasting time on ineffective or counterproductive strategies.

Training: Understanding the basics of youth substance use and gambling

We don't expect you or your students to be experts on the prevention of substance abuse or gambling problems. However, it is still very helpful to provide students with a general overview on the following topics:

- youth trends in substance use and abuse
- alcohol, marijuana and tobacco (the most widely used substances in Canada)
- gambling trends among youth
- continuum of use or process of addiction
- risk and protective factors, and understanding resiliency

Contact your local addiction services office to assist you in setting up your training.

They can

- provide curriculum to help you address the topics
- provide resources such as posters and information pamphlets
- consult with you to address your specific needs

This following section will take you through the four key steps in planning and carrying out a successful project: Needs Assessment, Setting Goals, Action Plan, and Evaluation.

Needs assessment

The needs assessment is an important first step to effective project planning. You will need to decide if this piece is done in collaboration with your peer leadership team, or if you (and other adult facilitators) will do the needs assessment and then bring the information to the peer leadership team to put into action. Some leadership groups might be quite capable of facilitating a needs assessment, but others may find the process too challenging.

A needs assessment is a way for you and your peer leadership team to better understand what students need and want. The needs assessment will help you to answer some of the following questions (AADAC, 2004):

- What do students think the contributing factors are for young people to use substances or gamble?
- What are the students' attitudes toward substance abuse in your school?
- What are the substances that are of concern? Tobacco? Alcohol? Other drugs? Gambling?
- What are the major risk factors that may cause students to use or gamble?
- What kind of pro-social activities already exist in the school or wider community?
- What do the students think of these activities?

Benefits of a needs assessment

The biggest benefit of a needs assessment is that it will highlight the strengths already existing within your school setting. Further benefits include

- providing all students with the opportunity to have a say in what the project will look like
- helping to identify the neediest areas or groups within the school
- increasing the chances that the students will engage in the project

Keep in mind that there is a big difference between the needs of students in Grade 7 and those in Grade 12. Ensure that your project is age appropriate.

How to do a needs assessment

Here is a quick three-step process to conduct your needs assessment.

1. Questions: who to ask, what to ask

Anyone at the school should be asked their opinion on what the specific substance issues are and what could be done to address them. Like your potential supporters, people who have important opinions could be students, teachers, administrators, caretakers and parents.

Here are some sample questions for students, teachers and parents:

a) Students:

- What activities do you like to take part in?
- What is already going on at school that you like?
- What do you think a positive school environment is?
- Why do you think some students choose to smoke, drink or use other drugs or gamble?

b) Teachers:

- Do you teach students about substance use and gambling in the classroom?
- Outside of the classroom, what kind of a role do you have in prevention?
- What do you think are the contributing factors to students using substances?
- What do you think are the contributing factors to students gambling?
- What do you think a positive school environment is?

c) Parents:

- What role do you have in prevention efforts within the school setting?
- What do you think a positive school environment is?
- What is already going on at the school that you like?
- What do you think may lead some students to choose to use substances?
- What do you think may lead some students to choose to gamble?

2. Collect your information:

Now that you know from whom you are going to ask for feedback, and what it is you're going to ask, you need to decide the format for asking. You can use one or a combination of the following methods:

- survey
- information booth
- interviews
- focus group

3. Use the information gathered:

Once you have the information, you can use it to inform the direction and choice of your project.

When discussing substance use and gambling, it may come to your attention that some students have needs beyond the scope that you and your peer leadership team can provide. You can call your local addiction services office for support.

Setting goals

There are two types of goals for this program. The first type are your peer leadership program goals. There may only be one of these. In the context here, some examples would be

- reducing student substance use and gambling
- positively influencing the school climate to increase protective factors
- bringing awareness of the issues of substance use and abuse and gambling problems to the school community

You have probably already thought about these goals; that is why you formed your team. As a group, from your needs assessment and from discussions with your team, other big picture goals can be determined. Doing this can help the rest of your team feel more connected to the program.

The needs assessment can also help you determine the second type of goals: project goals. These ones can be seen as baby steps toward the big picture goals.

An example of a project goal could be fun, inclusive lunch hour activities. This project goal would come about if, through your needs assessment, you all determined that students are bored during the lunch hour and that there have been instances of smoking or other substance use or gambling during that time.

Project goals should be realistic and feasible. They should also be measurable. An easy way to ensure your goals are all these things and more is to follow the SMART goals approach.

SMART goals

To help you understand what it takes to reach your goal, we suggest using the SMART goal-setting method. This method reminds you to make your goals Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely.

S: Specific goals will help to focus your team's work. Questions to ask your team

- what do you want to do?
- why is it important?
- how are you going to do it?

M: Measurable goals make it easier for the team to know when their goals have been met. The easier they are to measure, the easier the goals will be to manage. There are many ways to measure the success of a goal. For example, if you run a lunch time activity, you could ask

- how many students attended the event?
- how many students said they had fun?

The success of your goal will depend on what you think are realistic answers to these and other questions.

A: Achievable goals prevent the team from feeling frustrated. If goals are achievable, everyone will feel like they can see the hard work coming to an end. And as you probably know, it is much easier to work on projects with an end in sight, rather than those without one.

R: Realistic goals prevent the team from trying to take on too much. When making goals realistic, don't necessarily make them easy. Realistic just means that the goal can get done.

T: Timely goals are those that the team can complete within the time allotted, and within reasonable deadlines. Adding timelines to your process will provide focus and direction for team members.

Action plan

At this time, pull everything together and put it into motion by developing a plan of action. Attached is a sample action plan for you to use as a guide for making your own action plan. Your own plan will provide you and your leadership team with a structured way of keeping track of what activities will be in place, who is responsible for each activity, what the timeframes are and how you will know when you've met your goals.

Don't forget to celebrate when you meet your project goals. Small, medium or large, each success is a great opportunity to give yourselves a pat on the back and to keep the momentum going toward your ultimate program goal.

Sample: Action plan (AADAC, 2004)

Program Goal(s)								
Project Goals:		1.						
What do you want to accomplish?		2.						
3.								
Project Goal	Activities: What are the main activities needed to reach your goal?	Leader: Who will be responsible for each activity?	Tasks: What tasks need to happen in order to complete each activity?	Timeline: When will tasks be completed?	School Needs: What need in the school is this activity meeting?	Evaluation Plan: How will you know if your work is successful? How will you evaluate the results of your activities?	Results: What happened? What was accomplished? What needs improvement?	
1.								
2.								
3.								

Evaluation

Evaluation is an important part of this project for two reasons.

First, evaluating your project gives you a tangible way to document your success. This is important for team members, and is especially important for those people outside the team, as a way to show students, teachers and other supporters what it is you have done.

Second, evaluation is a way for you and your leadership team to analyze what you did in order to discover what worked and what areas need improvement. It provides a great record of learning for the next peer leadership team in subsequent years (AADAC, 1996).

You may choose to evaluate at the end of each project and then again at the end of the program year.

Evaluation questions

When going through the evaluation process, you will want to consider the following questions:

- What were your goals and did you meet them?
- What were the initial ideas in comparison to the actual outcomes?
- What were the challenges?
- What were the successes?
- How many students actually participated in comparison to how many you thought would participate?
- Did students enjoy themselves?
- Were teachers involved? Was this helpful?
- Who else was involved? What were their roles and what was the result of their involvement?

Tools for evaluation can be as simple as having participants fill in a brief survey or come to a focus group and share their thoughts and feelings about the project (while someone takes notes). It is also important to gain feedback from the peer leadership team on their perspectives about the process and end results of the project.

Steps

Here are some steps to take when conducting an evaluation of your project:

1. Refer to the project goals as the basis for evaluation.

Evaluations are clear, simple and related to the goals of the peer leadership project. If, for example, a project goal is to engage students in intramural activities at the lunch hour, the evaluation could include a tally of the number of students that attend the activities over a period of time. At the end of the program year, you should refer to the program goals in your evaluation, too.

2. Form the evaluation questions.

Evaluation often begins with specific questions like, “How many students does our peer leadership project help throughout the year?” or “What kind of students are most likely to come to the events?” Once the questions are formed, a plan is then drawn up to answer them.

3. Choose your evaluation method.

You can obtain evaluation information by observing, gathering information and asking questions. Data collection methods include surveys, individual or group interviews and focus groups. The data collection method(s) chosen must provide enough information to adequately answer the evaluation questions.

4. Plan an evaluation outline.

When planning the evaluation, be sure to consider

- what tasks need to be done
- who will do each task
- what resources are needed
- when each task will be completed
- how to present the results (school newsletter, presentations)
- who will receive the evaluation results

If you found the action plan a helpful tool, consider creating a similar evaluation chart.

5. Design your survey or interview questions.

Create questions that elicit the desired information without being leading. You should have more than just yes or no questions. It’s also a good idea to try out your questionnaire on a test audience to confirm that the questions ask what you think they ask.

6. Collect and consider your information.

For many peer leadership initiatives, information can be obtained routinely from people served. Try to do this with your project. In situations where it is impractical or inappropriate to interview or survey all individuals, you can use other procedures to collect similar information. For example, team members can keep logbooks to track subtle or informal interactions and effects.

It is important to plan for evaluation at the start of the project, before program activities begin.

Take your students through the process of a fictional program. Ask the students to think about a topic such as being green in their school setting. What are the most needy areas (for example, the field has a lot of litter, we don’t recycle, there’s nowhere to lock our bikes up)? What are some of the steps outlined in this manual that could help your students to fix a green problem at your school? As outlined in this manual, the program can be organized by splitting students into groups or pairs to go through identifying the target group, creating a goal statement, choosing projects and planning the evaluation process.

7. Compose the evaluation report.

Use the data and information you collected doing the evaluation to write the evaluation report. To do this, it may help to look at a book on the subject or speak to people in your community who have experience in this area.

8. Disseminate the information.

It is important to let all those who were involved (peer leaders, general student body, parents, teachers and other supporters) know what the results are from the projects and the program. This will help to sustain the effort, gain support for future initiatives, celebrate successes and learn from challenges.

Sample agenda: Team building day

8:45 Introduction

Though the students will be aware of the basic idea behind coming together as a group, through the recruitment process, it is important to reiterate the overall purpose of implementing a peer leadership program within your school setting:

1. The peer leadership program will help students gain important skills to become role models within their schools and communities.
2. Peer leaders will help the school to address substance abuse and gambling problems by choosing, implementing and directing specific projects.

9:00 Ice breakers

9:15 Trust-building activity

10:00 Break

10:15 Communication and co-operation activity

11:00 Break

11:15 Recognizing strengths

12:00 Lunch

1:00 Fourth activity

2:00 Break

2:15 Now What?

Introduce the peer leadership team to the concepts that will be covered in the half-day training on project planning.

3:00 Closure activities and reflection

Sample agenda: Project planning day

8:30 Welcome and ice breaker

8:45 Youth substance use and gambling training or information session

9:45 Break

10:00 Time to read over the project-planning guide

10:30 Fictional project planning

11:30 Break

11:45 Sharing of project ideas and processes

12:30 Wrap up

Resources

- Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission. (1996). *Peer support: A facilitator's guide to peer led programming*. Edmonton, AB: Author.
- Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission. (2002). *An overview of risk and protective factors: The Alberta Youth Experience Survey 2002*. Edmonton, AB: Author.
- Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission. (2003). *The Alberta Youth Experience Survey (TAYES) 2002: Summary report*. Edmonton, AB: Author.
- Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission. (2004). *Community action on drug abuse prevention*. Edmonton, AB: Author.
- Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission. (2006). *The Alberta Youth Experience Survey (TAYES) 2005: Summary report*. Edmonton, AB: Author.
- Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission. (2007). *Substance use prevention in the classroom*. Edmonton, AB: Author.
- Association for Experiential Education. Retrieved June 19, 2008, from <http://www.aee.org/customer/pages.php?pageid=28>
- Rohnke, K., & Butler, S. (1995). *Quicksilver: Adventure games, initiative problems, trust activities and a guide to effective leadership*. Iowa: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company.
- Tiven, L. (2002). *Peer leadership: Helping youth become change agents in their schools and communities*. Albany, NY: Partners Against Hate.