

WHAT IS A PEER?*

▶ ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

🕒 **Time:** 45 minutes

➔ **Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe a Peer's function;
- Identify what makes an effective Peer Educator;
- Identify core roles and responsibilities of Peers;
- Understand the benefits of a relationship with a Peer.

★ **Training Methods:** Lecture, Small Group Brainstorm Activity, Large Group Discussion

✓ **In This Activity You Will...**

- Define principles of peer programs (10 minutes).
- Assign brainstorming questions to groups of 4 and provide activity instructions (5 minutes).
- Allow participants to complete answers (15 minutes).
- Lead group discussion of answers to ensure understanding (15 minutes).

(continued next page)

Instructions

Note: This lecture is tailored for the Kansas City/St. Louis areas. please adapt to fit your own environment.

Lecture

1. Begin with a short lecture to introduce the concept of peer education programs. Peer Education programs share the following principles:
 - An understanding that people are more likely to hear and accept information that is presented and modeled by their peers.
 - A belief in the value and ability of people to bring about positive change in themselves and others
2. Peer Education programs were first developed to target youth in an effort to address youth sexual and reproductive rights according to the International Planned Parenthood Federation and to encourage positive student modeling and mentoring at high schools.
3. Success with youth has transcended to peer programs that target people of all ages and with a variety of chronic diseases.

Research has shown us that peer programs are successful in the fields of mental health, cancer, multiple sclerosis, heart disease and HIV/AIDS nationally and internationally.

4. In Kansas City peer programs can be found at Planned Parenthood, Mental Health Association of the Heartland, St. Lukes Health System-Cancer Department, at HIV Primary Care Clinics such as Kansas City Free Health Clinic and Truman Medical Center.

* This module comes from the Missouri People to People Training Manual, 2008.

WHAT IS A PEER?

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY (CONT.)

Materials:

- Newsprint (one copy for each small group)
- Markers
- Masking Tape
- Handout – Brainstorming Activity
- Trainer's Guide – Potential answers for Brainstorming Activity

Preparation:

- Print handouts
- Prepare newsprint (with a different question that each group will discuss)

In St. Louis they can be found at Barnes Siteman Cancer Center for Women, St. Lukes St. Louis Cancer Program, in the recent past St. Louis Effort for Aids and Washington University had peer programs.

5. In the past decade there has been an interest in incorporating peer educators in health care programs to promote adherence to health routines such as patients attending medical appointments, taking medications, navigating social service systems and in chronic disease prevention.
6. We will spend the next [insert appropriate amount of time here] looking at the knowledge, skills, role and responsibilities and benefits of Peer Educators.
7. First, we are going to do a Brainstorming exercise that will help us understand some of the key concepts of peer education.

Brainstorm Activity

1. Introduce the activity by explaining that participants will be assigned to small groups to brainstorm answers to key questions that will define what a peer is and some roles and responsibilities.
2. Pass out the Brainstorming Activity.
3. Assign participants to 4 groups by counting off 1-4 until all participants are assigned to a group.
4. Assign a space in the room for each group.
5. Ask participants to go to their assigned group in the respective space.
6. Give each small group a piece of prepared newsprint that has a question written on it.

WHAT IS A PEER?



The most important thing you do as a peer is to connect with the client; and to build trust. Because unless you build trust, the client is not going to speak to you or believe any of what you say.

Jackie Howell
Peer Educator
New York, NY



7. As each group to appoint a reporter and a recorder.
8. Instruct group to use the newsprint to brainstorm answers to the question.
9. Tell the group they will have about 10 minutes to do this activity.
10. Bring the entire group back together and ask each reporter to go over his or her group's work.
11. Ask open-ended questions to draw out thoughts on how a peer might be of service to a person living with HIV.

Summary

- Ask participants if they now understand what an effective Peer Educator is, what some of the benefits of working with a Peer Educator and what are some of the roles and responsibilities.
- Explain to participants that responsibilities will change based on the needs of the environment/agency that a Peer Educator maybe working at, but the core components remain the same.

* This module is part of the online toolkit *Building Blocks to Peer Success*. For more information, visit http://www.hdwg.org/peer_center/training_toolkit. This module comes from the Missouri People to People Training Manual, 2008.

WHAT IS A PEER?

SESSION HANDOUT

BRAINSTORMING ACTIVITY

What is a Peer?

What makes an effective Peer Educator?

What are the roles and responsibilities of peer educator?

What are the benefits of a peer educator?

WHAT IS A PEER?

SESSION TRAINER'S GUIDE

POTENTIAL ANSWERS BRAINSTORMING ACTIVITY

What is a peer?

- Someone who is my age
- Experiences similar experiences as me
- Someone I can relate to
- Someone who provides support
- Someone who fights the same fight
- Someone who I have something in common with
- Helps bring about positive change in others
- Someone who doesn't pass judgment

What makes an effective peer educator?

- A person who instills a sense of hope to others
- Plants seeds of knowledge
- An effective communicator
- Provides general health information
- Helps gets people into care
- A good listener
- Is a good role model
- Problem solver
- Knows the Ryan White system of services
- Available when I need them
- Does not give me advice

What is not an effective peer educator?

- Give medical advice (Doctors, Nurse Practitioners and Nurses are trained to provide this type of information. Peers receive updated information on treatment options, side effects of medications and always refer the client back to the health care provider)
- Serve as a licensed counselor (The capacity of a peer is to provide support. Licensed Counselors receive education, supervision and complete state licensure examinations)
- Make promises (Part of human nature is to want to help others, however if we say that we are going to do something and we don't clients do not forget. The trust factor in the relationship will be affected.)
- Judge or look down on peer (The relationship should be on the same playing field with mutual respect)
- Ignore feelings (Affirming feelings is acknowledgement that they are real for the client)

WHAT IS A PEER?

SESSION TRAINER'S GUIDE (cont.)

POTENTIAL ANSWERS BRAINSTORMING ACTIVITY (CONT.)

What is not an effective peer educator? (cont.)

- Act aggressively (Aggressive behavior pushes clients away in stead of building a trusting relationship that is mutually respected)
- Do things for the peers that they can do for themselves (A peer provides a client with knowledge and options and it is up to a client to make their own decisions. The peer motivates a client to empower themselves and feel confident that they can be independent.)
- Talk about themselves too much (A peer provides comfort to the client, shares experiences and is living proof that it is possible to live a productive, fulfilling life with HIV. A peer program is client-centered and about the client.)
- Break confidentiality (When building a relationship it is vital to assure the client that what is said is confidential which encourages open communication. Not respecting confidentiality breaks down the relationship and the work previously achieved)

What are the roles and responsibilities of a peer educator?

- Client advocate
- Educator
- Active Listener
- Help find resources such as employment, social services, mental health and medical services
- Care about peer
- Model self care
- Make themselves available to peers they serve
- Know that everyone has a different experience
- Encourage peers to ask questions
- Bridge gaps with providers and case managers
- Act direct, clear and assertive

What are the benefits of a peer educator?

- Gives the patient a message of hope, wellness and engage them in their own healthcare
- Increases knowledge of HIV/AIDS
- Clarify misinformation and dispel unnecessary fears
- Communicates that HIV disease is chronic and manageable
- Communicates that HIV treatment works
- Advises patients that greater than 90% adherence is the minimum necessary for effective adherence and achieving it is possible for everyone
- Fosters positive beliefs and empowerment