



**Preventing Relationship Violence:
Showcase of a school based Peer
Education Program**



Preventing Relationship Violence: Presentation Overview

- Young people and violence
- Background to the project
- What we did
- Evaluation
- Peer Education in 2008



Domestic and Dating Violence

- 1/4 young people witness or experience abuse in the home (Indermaur, 2001)
- 1/3 young people are abused in their dating relationships (Indermaur, 2001)
- Police attend more domestic disputes between 18-29 year olds than any other age group (Mann, 2007)
- Regardless of whether a child or young person witnesses or is directly targeted for abuse the consequences are the same.



Domestic and Dating Violence

Some of these consequences include:

- Physical
 - Injury, stress related illness
- Emotional/psychological
 - Anxiety, depression, PTSD, guilt, shame, self-blame, maladaptive coping e.g. substance use
- Social
 - Withdrawn, inappropriate attitudes or norms about violence
- Behavioural
 - Developmental regression, acting out, sleeping difficulties
- Violence in future relationships



Why is violence so prevalent among young people?

- Exposure to violence as children → model and normalise parental dynamics
- Culture of silence
 - Fear
 - Secrecy
 - Attitude that DFV is a 'private' family issue that should not be discussed/talked about
- Low awareness or knowledge about violence in relationships
- Relationship naivety
 - Boundaries
 - Jealousy vs. passion
- Education is imperative for effective prevention and early intervention

Project Background: Jordan Fogarty

- The Jordan Fogarty Appeal 04/05
- Raised \$50,000 for the WCDFVS
- This money was used to fund the Dating and Domestic Violence PEP



Dating and Domestic Violence



PEP

- Partnership project between the WCDFVS, DET and FDVU
- Aims to raise teachers and students awareness about FDV, TDV, and support services in their area using a Peer Education approach
- Role of Peer Educators
 - To act as contact or information points for students seeking information about FDV, TDV or support services
 - To conduct activities or events within the school to raise awareness about FDV, TDV and support services
 - Peer educators are not counsellors, they are to be contacted for information only!



Rationale for Peer Education

- Peer Education is information sharing between people from the same peer group
- It is useful, particularly in educating people about sensitive issues because:
 - The information is age and group appropriate;
 - Young people are more likely to seek information from a friend than from an adult; and
 - Young people are more likely to listen to the advice received by a friend or peer.
- So why not inform young people to ensure that accurate information and messages are being spread around!



Project Timeline: What we did

- The project was implemented in two schools: Cecil Andrews S.H.S in Armadale, and Coodanup Community College in Mandurah
- Project Stages
 - Connecting schools to local service providers
 - Awareness raising among teachers and students
 - Students EOI to become a peer educator
 - Screening process and peer educator selection
 - Peer Educator training
 - Support group
 - Awareness raising with WCDFVS support

Peer Educator Training



Peer Educators Raising Awareness

- Fund raising for local refuge
- Wristbands: 'Speak out against domestic violence and sexual assault'
- Dating violence seminars
- Posters
- Pamphlets
- Developing a booklet – violence and young people
- Presentations at assembly
- Promoted as contact points for information





Evaluation

Conducted by Deirdre Davies – Just 4 Research

- Pre-test and post-test questionnaires
- Focus group with peer educators
- Interviews with teachers and student support staff



Evaluation

- Pre-test

- Over 50% of the student's surveyed reported knowing someone who had experienced abuse
- Over 30% demonstrated violence supportive attitudes and low awareness about violence
e.g. "A person being abused by their partner must have done something to cause it"

Agree 20%

Not sure 21%

"FDV only involves physical abuse"

True 30%



Evaluation

- Post-test

- Increase in knowledge about relationship violence particularly in regards to recognising different forms of abuse (average change about 15%)
- Attitude shifts away from victim blaming were also evident (average change about 10%)



Evaluation

- 15 new disclosures to student services staff
- Peer educators approached by other students for information
- Improvements in self-confidence among peer educators
- Support group – initially an ad-hoc addition – was viewed by staff as being highly valuable and an important addition to the project



Peer Education in 2008

- Funded by Lotterywest to deliver the project in a further 6 schools

- Preliminary interest has been expressed by:
 - Newman S.H.S Pilbara
 - Kununurra S.H.S Kimberley
 - Belmont City College
 - Wagin District High School
 - Katanning S.H.S
 - WA College of Agriculture Narrogin
 - Manjimup S.H.S
 - Australind S.H.S
 - Mt Barker Community College
 - Querideen District High School

- Will also be working to modify the resources so that they can be added to 'Growing and Developing Healthy Relationships' curricula



Contact Information

Nicole Leggett

Women's Council for Domestic and Family
Violence Services (WA)

Ph: 9420 7264

project@womenscouncil.com.au