ADOLESCENT HEALTH PROJECT

Summary

The Adolescent Health Project will allow 13-18 year olds in the Antigonish town and county to become directly involved in their health care by engaging them in a self-help health project. The project is designed to provide teens with the information, skills, and resources that they determine they need to make responsible and informed decisions about critical health issues in their lives. Our research will look at those health concerns that teens themselves identify as important; these might include: mental health/suicide/depression; teen pregnancy; drug and alcohol abuse; relationships.
We choose to use the World Health Organization's definition of health as a state of SOCIAL, PHYSICAL, & EMOTIONAL well-being.

Our GOALS are:

* To explore the health needs of adolescents in the Antigonish community and to address, specifically, the health issues surrounding adolescent sexuality.

* To allow adolescents to identify and take responsibility for their health needs

* To provide information for parents and community to aid them in helping adolescents with their health care problems.

* To work with other community agencies and organizations to develop strategies for working with adolescents in a self-enabling way.

Phase I of this project of the Adolescent Health Project will explore the health needs of the target population through the implementation of a NEEDS ASSESSMENT which will include the input of adolescents throughout its development, implementation, and analysis. It is our intention to strengthen the ability of individuals, groups, and the community as a whole to communicate and address the stated health needs of adolescents, utilizing opportunities for dialogue and health promotion through the needs assessment process.

Project Description

The adolescent health project divides itself into three phases:
1) Needs Assessment
2) Program Development
3) Program Implementation

Phase I - Needs Assessment

We recognize that health is a life-long process in which health care is self-determined. Adolescents need to learn more about their bodies to enable them to make informed choices and take responsibility for their own health. The adult community needs to have a better understanding and knowledge base about the health concerns of its young people; it needs direction from young people themselves in program and service planning and implementation. A needs assessment, therefore, is a critical beginning phase in the development of the Adolescent Health Project.

Methodology

We plan to use a social action research model, that does Not rely on traditional rules of random sampling, but does allow for rich, detailed descriptive accounts of participants perceptions and experience. We do not intend to make generalizations or claims of representation for the entire population of adolescents; we do expect to be involved in a research process that will begin to build a foundation of better understanding and analysis of our adolescent community's situation and experience, an opportunities for dialogue and community development.

We will use a combination of research approaches for data collection as follows:

a) Adolescent Health Attitudes and Behaviour Survey

This survey of approximately 250-350 representative target population members will be the core of the needs assessment research. It will include:

a) An Adolescent Health Questionnaire
b) Small teen discussion groups around health concerns

Both the questionnaire and discussion groups will be implemented by teens who will be hired and trained by Project staff to undertake the research

b) Key Informant Interviews

We believe that the perceptions and insights of community professionals, leaders, and decision makers, are essential in providing us with a more complete picture of adolescent health issues in Antigonish.

The 30 - 40 key informant interviews will be undertaken by project staff. It is our hope that consultation with key informants will enhance the research process and build community support for future health promotion projects.

c) Community Impressions

We believe that well-facilitated, structured, positive dialogue around adolescent health issues and concerns, can and should take place in our community. Through public forum(s), attendance at regular on-going meetings (Home and School Association; town council; service clubs,) we will provide opportunities for beginning dialogue around the issue of adolescent health needs and status in the community. We see this process occurring both during the needs assessment research, as a means of collecting relevant information on community perspectives, as well as following the final report on needs assessment results.

d) Statistical Review

A statistical review will provide general demographic information on the adolescent population in Antigonish town and county.

e) Review of Community Adolescent Health and Support Services

This will involve a general review on the type and range of adolescent health services available in our community and related areas.

f) Literature and Resource Review

Project Organization

The following two committees will be formed to play consultative roles in the course of the project:

Adolescent Advisory Committee

The Adolescent Advisory Committee will be comprised of 6 - 8 adolescents who are a reasonably representative cross-section of the local target population. The Adolescent Advisory Committee will help us ensure our research approach has relevance and meaning for adolescents in our community.

Community Advisory Committee

The Community Advisory Committee will be comprised of 6 - 8 members and will oversee and advise on all aspects of the needs assessment planning, implementation, analysis, and reportage. It will include 2 members from the Adolescent Advisory Committee.

Project Reporting

In the final stage of the needs assessment process we will organize the information and data collected into a final project report. We intend, as well, to use video to report on some

aspect of the research and/or process. We also expect to develop a pamphlet which will simply and concisely present our research findings and illuminate the descriptive/personal element of the adolescent experience in our community,

Community Adolescent Health Action Committee

At the final stage of the needs assessment phase, it is our intention to identify those individuals/groups in our community who have an interest in and a commitment to developing programs that have been defined by the target population as being relevant and necessary in addressing their health concerns. The purpose of this committee will be to explore project report recommendation and pursue options for future health promotion programming and service delivery.