

WHAT IS THE ADOLESCENT HEALTH PROJECT

It is a participatory action research project which examines the health issues and concerns of adolescents 13-18 years of age through the eyes of the teens themselves.

GOALS OF THE PROJECT

1. To enable adolescents in Antigonish town and county to identify their health care needs and to take responsibility for them.
 2. To explore the health needs of adolescents in the Antigonish community.
 3. To provide information for parents and the community to empower them to assist adolescents with their identified health problems.
 4. To work with other community agencies and institutions to develop strategies for working with adolescents in a self-enabling way.
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PROJECT ORGANIZATION

The day to day work of the project was organized and directed by two staff: a research director and a research coordinator.

The Adolescent Advisory Committee is composed of 11 teens, residing in Antigonish town and county, consisting of males and females ages 15-18 years. This committee served to direct and focus the work of the project throughout the planning, implementation and ongoing evaluation of the project ensuring the target population's input and involvement throughout the project.

RESEARCH METHODS USED

Adolescent Health Attitude and Behaviour Survey

A 14 page questionnaire was developed, designed, and administered by local teens. Over 400 teens in Antigonish town and county completed this survey which began the process of identifying the primary health concerns of Antigonish teens.

Teen Focus Groups

Thirty teens ages 14-18 participated in informal discussion groups which were designed to enhance and broaden the information gathered in the teen health survey.

continued (Research Methods Used)

Key Informant Interviews

Over 40 one on one interviews with community professionals and leaders were undertaken in an effort to gain an understanding of adolescent health issues in Antigonish as viewed by those who work with or make decisions affecting teens in our community.

Community Impressions Survey

A variety of community groups participated in completing a one page survey designed to elicit information and perceptions of parents and the larger adult community around teen health concerns.

Statistical Review.

Review of Community Health and Support Services.

Literature and Resource Review.

UP-COMING WORK

The Adolescent Health Project has revealed through its research that our teenagers want access to health information that will enable them to make responsible, informed decisions in their lives.

Teens are seeking adult role models within the community, and long for parental support and understanding.

Our up-coming work will focus on 3 of the most crucial health issues identified by both our teens and the larger community:

1. Alcohol Use and Abuse
2. Mental Health
3. Relationships

Three separate health promotion weeks will be organized around these issues. Our goal is to work with existing community resources in a spirit of partnership, together acknowledging the interrelatedness of teenager, family, and community to create an effective, positive response to the health needs facing our youth.

ADOLESCENT HEALTH ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOUR SURVEY RESULTS

"Accept what goes on instead of closing your eyes, then begin to look for solutions"

- Teen Health Survey Response

The adolescents of Antigonish face a number of serious health problems:

ALCOHOL USE AND ABUSE

- * 83% of surveyed teens, 13 - 18 years old have reported using alcohol.
- * 87.5% of teens surveyed report having a friend or friends who abuse alcohol.
- * 46% of teens surveyed report taking 5 or more drinks at one drinking session.
- * 54% of surveyed teens report having been in a motor vehicle driven by an impaired driver.

"Organize something in Antigonish to convince teens to stop drinking - we're drinking our lives away."

- Teen Health Survey Response

MENTAL HEALTH

- * 74.5% of teens surveyed report having been seriously "stressed out" due to personal problems.
- * 13.5 % of surveyed teens report having attempted suicide. 40% of these have NEVER received help from family, friends, or a professional.

"We need more talks about suicide and accidental death - too many are happening, teens need someone to talk to."

- Teen Health Survey Response

ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

- * 20% of surveyed teens report witnessing physical abuse in their homes.
- * 17% of surveyed teens report having been physically abuse in their homes.
- * 15% of surveyed teens report having been sexually abused:
30% of these, report abuse by a family member; 36% by a family friend or neighbour; 16% by a dating partner; 16% by a stranger.

"We need information on how to deal with sexual abuse, very important since many girls I know - 4 friends and a lot of my family are abused. It has a very profound effect on your life."

- Teen Health Survey Response

SEXUALITY

- * 34% of surveyed 13 - 18 year olds in Antigonish report having had sexual intercourse.
- * 51% of surveyed 16 - 18 year olds in Antigonish report having had sexual intercourse.

"Don't pretend sexual activity and alcohol abuse do not exist. Don't be naive. Talk with your children adult to adult about this."

- Teen Health Survey Response

TEENS WANT INFORMATION - the top 6 topics about which teens report wanting more information.

- 1) Self esteem 2) Body Image 3) Teenage alcohol use and abuse 4) Suicide 5) Depression 6) Dating

"Help us to believe in ourselves and strive for our goals because if people support us we feel better about ourselves."

- Teen Health Survey Response