

Western North Carolina AIDS Project

Lessons Learned

- An afterschool program can be difficult with regard to transportation especially when working with youth who do not drive nor have their own car. Kids are either late because of afterschool transportation issues out of their control or a parent arrives early before the conclusion of a program on any particular day. This leads to youth missing crucial aspects of the curriculum. In the future, it would be helpful to consider adding transportation services in as part of the program.
- Working in religious settings and/or with religiously affiliated organizations can limit the inclusion of comprehensive safe sexual practices for the intended audiences. At times working in religious settings was difficult because it limited the full immersion of safe sexual practices (condom use) for youth
- When speaking on sensitive issues, such as sexual health, allot for more time for questions/concerns at the end of sessions. Time originally allotted for most sessions did not provide enough time for facilitators to answer all of the students' questions. Sexual health is a subject which draws much interest and speculation from youth.

Success

- The students were extremely open
- Often surprised facilitators with candor, honesty, and inquisitive nature
 - o The students had genuine questions and concerns. They wanted real answers.
- Eye opening how young people are so open
- Youth are also willing to educate adults on current trends and slang terms when comfortable with the instructors
- Strong bonds were formed during program between youth and facilitators. Evidence of great trust, support, and guidance was experienced by facilitators and youth

Best Practices

- Collaboration is crucial for successful youth engagement. Reached out to organizations that were already working with youth to hold afterschool programs. Where youth already felt safe and comfortable attending such a program (Boys and Girls club, local LGBT alliance (Youth Outright-serves western NC, especially Asheville), YWCA afterschool program)
- Used LGBT friendly language in program, which made the curriculum more inclusive and safe for all students
- Group activities were instrumental in generating discussion and participation from the youth. A larger group discussion followed smaller group activities to review what was discussed in smaller group settings. Initial large group discussions aren't very successful because the students don't always trust strangers (mainly adults) at first
- Incorporating games such as Apples to Apples and Mad Gab were effective to lighten the mood and establish rapport with youth. It was also important to not always talk about sex and STDs.

Often games were played just to have fun. Better discussions held in environments where the youth feel safe and comfortable