

HIV POSITIVE SPEAKERS PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Background

Using HIV positive speakers in classrooms has proven to be a powerful educational intervention for influencing attitudes, knowledge and behavior among youth. Research supports the value of using HIV positive speakers in breaking through denial and combating myths and misconceptions. Under a grant from the Vermont Department of Education, the Center for Health and Learning has gathered a team of HIV positive individuals who are committed to providing this education. They have been trained to share the parts of their stories that support prevention and educational goals, how to answer questions effectively and how to avoid expressing opinions in classroom settings.

The Speakers Program represents the diversity of our community and those affected by HIV: gay men, lesbians, heterosexuals, men, women, Anglo's, African Americans, Latinos and people whose infection stemmed from sexual behavior as well as drug behavior. We will attempt to match a speaker to your students' needs and your requests, knowing that the more closely students identify with a speaker the more effective the learning experience will be AND that there is a lot to learn from any story.

The Role of the Speaker

Speakers are asked to limit their presentation to their own stories. They are not responsible for giving information about HIV transmission, prevention, medications, disease specifics, etc. (Many people living with HIV do not have extensive information on these aspects of the disease.) Speakers are not responsible for referring students into services, supporting students individually in any way or speaking for any "group" of HIV infected individuals. They are not allowed to give advice or their opinions. Their job is tell their story of HIV risk, infection, and survival that illustrates how risky attitudes and behaviors can lead to HIV. They tell their story of living with HIV so that young people can understand the realities, separate myth from fact, and develop awareness, understanding and empathy for those in our communities living with HIV.

Payment and Scheduling

Speakers in this program are paid a stipend of \$50 for each session and at least \$25 for each additional session. Speakers can speak up to a maximum of three sessions in a row. Periodically CHL will have funds available to offer schools to help pay these stipends.

Educational Goals of HIV Prevention Using an HIV+ Speaker

After this session, students will be able to:

- *Distinguish myth from fact (that HIV can infect anyone who engages in risk behavior; that HIV infection is not visible, etc.)*
- *Recognize that they are vulnerable to infection*
- *Identify attitudes associated with risk behavior*
- *Feel motivated to practice abstinence or safer sexual behaviors*

- *Replace irrational fear of those infected with HIV with positive and compassionate responses*
- *Intervene when confronted with prejudice about HIV infection*

CHL Responsibilities

- Work to schedule a speaker for the times you request
- Send confirmation information to you (Speaker's first name, details of their story)
- Send confirmation information to your speaker (dates, times, directions and your emergency contact information in case of cancellation)
- Call the speaker the day before to remind them of their schedule
- Collect payment from the school and pay the speaker once an evaluation has been submitted by the teacher
- Forward the feedback to teachers and speakers when problems arise or agreed upon roles were violated

Teacher Responsibilities:

- Commit by signature to the principles outlined in the form *Using HIV+ Speakers in Your Classroom: Teacher Roles and Responsibilities Contract*
- Arrange for funding for the speaker and inform the business office of the arrangements
- Conduct HIV education before and after the speaker visit with suggestions that represent good education practice outlined in the attachment *HIV + Speakers Program Curriculum Guide for the Classroom*.
- Ensure that HIV/AIDS fact sheets and anonymous testing sites along with hotline numbers are available.
- Be prepared to answer student questions and/or make referrals long after the speaker has left.
- Be prepared to provide or make referrals for emotional support for students if needed. Some students, usually with family stories similar to speakers, may experience some reactions to the experience.
Fill out the evaluation after the program and return it to CHL.
- Assign, screen for crisis intervention and submit to CHL the *Student Evaluation/Thank You Letter*.
- If a student reveals that s/he or someone else is in danger or at risk, follow reporting guidelines in your school policy.

Speaker Responsibilities:

- Communicate in a timely manner with CHL in order to make scheduling efficient.
- Follow through with the speaking commitment specifics (time, place, etc.) and get help from support people for transportation, processing or other needs that would interfere with your speaking commitment.
- Tell the parts of your story that meet the educational goals and are adapted to the time frame and student characteristics.
- Respect the boundaries of your role.
- Fill out the evaluation after the program and return it to CHL. This will trigger payment.

There are other avenues for providing this type of education. Many of the various AIDS Service Organizations have coordinated the use of HIV infected speakers for years in local schools. Some teachers prefer scheduling speakers through these agencies because they are accompanied by a prevention professional/advocate, and/or because they want to build or maintain their relationship with that agency and/or support the students' ability to do the same. Below is a list of Vermont AIDS Service Organizations that might be able to fill school requests for HIV infected speakers and can provide resource lists for your presentation (testing sites, fact sheets, hotline numbers, etc.)

AIDS Services for Monadnock Region

P O Box 396
Gilsum, NH 03448
603-357-6855, 1-800-639-7903
susan.macneil@asmronline.org

ACORN

www.acornvtnh.org
2 Blacksmith Street,
Lebanon, NH 03766
603-448-8887
acorn@valley.net

IMANI Health Institute

294 North Winooski Avenue
P.O. Box 5003
Burlington, VT 05401
802-864-2631

AIDS Project of Southern Vermont

www.aidsprojectsouthernvermont.org
Bennington Office
324 Main Street
P.O. Box 4264
Bennington, VT 05201
802-447-8007

Brattleboro Office
67 Main Street
P.O.Box 1486
Brattleboro, VT 050301
802-254-4444

Twin State Network

www.twinstatesnetwork.net
P.O. Box 882
Bellows Falls, VT 05101
888-338-8796
TSWNtswn@twinstatesnetwork.org

Vermont Cares

www.vtcares.org

Burlington Office serving Chittenden, Franin,
Grand Isle, Washington and Lamoille Counties
187 St. Paul Street
P.O. Box 5248
Burlington, VT 05402
802-863-2437

Rutland Office
27 South Main Street
P.O. Box 6033
Rutland, VT 05701
802-775-5884

St. Johnsbury Office: serving Caledonia, Essex
and Orleans Counties
1290 Hospital Drive, Suite 1
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819
802-748-9061

CENTER FOR HEALTH & LEARNING
28 Vernon St Suite 319
Brattleboro VT 05301

tel: 802.254.6590
fax: 802.254.5816
www.healthandlearning.org