



Combating Substance Use Disorders through Education and Connection

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Logic Model

Outcomes

- To reduce recidivism due to substance use in the ethnic minority adolescent population after their stay at the Lee County Youth Development Center.
- Aim was supported in two ways. Mentorship and connection (phase I), and a subsequent education seminar and self-reflection period (phase II).

Outputs

- 43 adolescents participated.
- Participants spent an average of 22 hours in phase I and a total of six hours in phase II.
- Attitudes and knowledge on topics were measured using eight multiple-choice questions, five free-response, and two ratings scales, taken before and after the seminar.

Activities

- During Phase I, the fellow met for weekly activities with participants. i.e., playing sports, board games, or cards games, and participating in group sessions to discuss life skills.
- During Phase II, the fellow presented a substance use seminar made of three to four 2-hour presentations.

Inputs

- Average of 28 hours were spent with each cohort over a two month period.
- Time spent on research (15 hours) and planning, logistics, and post-seminar data gathering (45 hours).
- Guest speakers on topics of interest.
- Educational handouts on topics covered were made for participants.
- Participants that completed both phases received a certificate.

Introduction

National data obtained over the past decade reflects an increase in drug behavioral risk in the overall population; and although no one demographic is more important than the next, safeguarding our adolescent population should be a priority due to the direct, negative correlation between brain development and substance use – particularly in early adolescence.

Overdose mortality data for Alabama makes it clear that education and prevention of substance use related overdose should be prioritized. Mortality rates in Alabama increased from 15.7 to 22.3 per 100,000 between 2015 - 2022. Drug overdose mortality rates among African Americans was observed to have the highest relative increase in the same timespan. Given that Alabama census data for African Americans only shows a slight increase of 26.4% - 27.2% between said time period, Alabama's African American adolescent population requires urgent attention.



Participants from the Third Cohort during the Alcohol Use Disorder presentation.

Impact

Personal belief regarding origin of substance use, alcohol as a substance of abuse, health effects of vape pens and cigarettes, and marijuana use in general were measured in a quantitative analysis utilizing data from the pre- and post-assessments.

Alcohol use perceptions demonstrated a statistically significant change (< 0.001) post seminar – with 100% of participants agreeing that alcohol was a substance of abuse.

Understanding of vape pens impact on health also showed a statistically significant change (< 0.003). Data reflected a 26.7% change post seminar – resulting in 95% of participants recognizing that vape pens are as harmful as traditional methods of tobacco intake post-seminar. Other changes were not statistically significant.

Future for the project includes a summary of pertinent material into one two-hour presentation and integrating it into pre-established substance use disorder and smoking cessation clubs at Harrison College of Pharmacy.

To sustain the project, the site mentor was given source material, presentations, and training in order to continue the education for future participants.

Critical Assessment

The most difficult challenge was the weight of inadequacy and not measuring up to personal expectations. It is hard to quantify long-term hope and change, in a cross-sectional study/project. It is hard to see that the sample size is not what one had intended. Overall, It is difficult to digest when what one envisioned is not what is the end-result. I wanted this project to be grand and had imagined it to be a “thing” that changed countless of lives; and while the project was statistically successful in some accounts, I learned the hard lesson all new educators learn. Often, it is not the 99 that will benefit from what one offers, it is the 1 that will, and their value is just as needed and important as that of the whole.



Participants from the First Cohort during the Alcohol Use Disorder Presentation.

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