



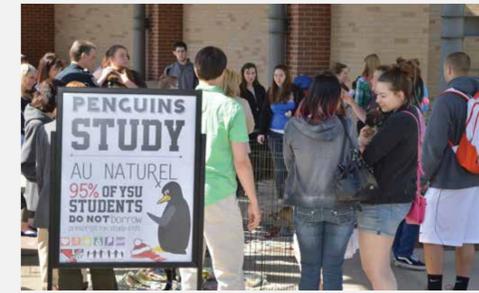
Coalition for a Drug-Free Mahoning County



Overall Project Description

Our project target population is 18 - 25 year old students attending a state Institute of Higher Education (IHE) located in Mahoning County. Of the student population, 90% commute to campus, with the remaining 10% residing in campus housing. Additionally, 57% of students attending the IHE are from Mahoning County. Data from the 2013 Student Survey revealed that most of the target population did not

engage in Non-Medical Use of Prescription Drugs (NMUPD) in the past 30 days; of those who did, prescription stimulants were the drug of choice. To maintain the high levels of NMUPD abstinence present on campus, we have implemented a social norming campaign - Penguins Study Au Naturel - to encourage students to be part of the 95% of IHE students do not engage in the misuse of prescription stimulants.



Assessment

The Coalition for a Drug-Free Mahoning County and a local IHE partnered to collect quantitative and qualitative data. Data from the 2013 Student Survey revealed: 7.9 percent of students reported NMUPD in the past 30 days; 5.4 percent of students reported NMU of prescription stimulants in the past 30 days; 3.4 percent of students reported NMU of prescription pain relievers in the past 30 days; and 2.0 percent of students reported NMU of prescription sedatives in the past 30 days. Interestingly, although rates of NMUPD on campus was reported to be low, 19 percent of students perceive that there is a problem with NMUPD on campus. In a series of focus groups, we found that many students report a mindset that "everyone is doing [NMUPD]."

Planning

Our coalition, using data from our community readiness assessment, county-wide PEP survey, and other data sources, recognized the significance of NMUPD in addiction, and sought to decrease or prevent the incidence of NMUPD among 18 - 25 year old students in Mahoning County. In partnership with the IHE, we targeted students at the IHE and gathered survey data that revealed students were unlikely to participate in NMUPD, but when they did, the prescription drug most likely to be abused was stimulant medication (e.g., Adderall, Ritalin, etc.). Together, the coalition and the IHE determined that a positive "We Are the Majority"-style campaign aimed at empowering the students who do not participate in NMUPD would maintain or decrease the number of students reporting NMUPD.

Evaluation

As a result of our positive campaign emphasizing "95% of [IHE] students do not borrow prescription drugs," we hope to expose students to the message that NMUPD is rare among students, increasing their commitment to a NMUPD-free lifestyle and ultimately encouraging an additional 1% of students who formerly reported NMUPD to now participate in abstinence from NMUPD. Over the long-term, we hope to see an increase of 2-3% of students reporting abstinence from NMUPD, or effectively, that 97-98% of 18 - 25 year old students at the IHE would practice abstinence from NMUPD.

Capacity

Mahoning County completed the MIPH Public Readiness Assessment in January, 2012, and the community was deemed to be in the Pre-Planning stage of readiness. Current data shows Mahoning County is the eighth-highest county for prescription drug overdose deaths, and OARRS data reveals prescription opiates are dispensed at a rate of 82 units per capita. The Coalition, in response, has built membership across the geographic and demographic regions of the county to increase awareness and provide information for Mahoning County residents. We feel this broad-based approach is important because 57% of the IHE students leave campus and return to homes in Mahoning County each day, where they are influenced by family, friends, coworkers, healthcare providers, law enforcement, and others. Additionally, we have built relationships on campus and continued to educate the Rec and Wellness, Police, Housing, and Student Activities departments.

Implementation

We have implemented a social norming campaign designed to increase awareness among 18 - 25 year olds on campus via delivery of a positive "We Are the Majority" style message. Based on input from a student focus group, the campaign message Penguins Study Au Naturel was created by a group of students and approved by administration; the message was printed on posters which were hung around campus, and on t-shirts, which were distributed to students the week before finals. As the free t-shirts were distributed, students were encouraged to be part of the 95% who do not use another student's prescription "study aids."



Sustainability

Students were receptive to the campaign and very excited to receive the t-shirts; students and staff alike commented that they were glad to see a message promoting studying without using prescription stimulants (unless as prescribed). The t-shirt launch was covered by local television media and favorable news stories relating the IHE's proactive stance regarding prescription drug abuse ran for two days. The IHE will continue to support the project through positive publicity and continued message distribution, primarily posters. The coalition will work with the IHE to provide prevention expertise, especially regarding the importance of NMUPD abstinence. Additional IHE contributions will include message development, student volunteers, and staff participation in message disbursement. Outside the IHE, supporters will provide sponsorship for future t-shirt giveaways and possibly other promotional items that appeal to 18 - 25 year old college students.

Cultural Competence

Cultural competence played a significant role in Mahoning County's SPFSIG process. It was important to first gauge the community's understanding of the substance abuse problems in our county, and then to understand why they held those beliefs. Qualitative data from the IHE provided insight into both student and staff perceptions regarding use, access, and availability. The use of a focus group of 18-25 year old students from the IHE helped us to both hone a message that would have interest and appeal, and to deliver it in a way that would be lasting yet desirable to students. Students loved the Penguins Study Au Naturel slogan, and the administration was amenable to both the message (edgy, but not risqué) and the use of the school mascot (Pete Penguin) sans his traditional hat and scarf. Marrying the IHE student culture and administration culture provided an opportunity to spotlight both the message and the administration's support of student success through NMUPD abstinence.