



School Solutions

Project Report

Executive Summary

School Solutions Project

Coordinated by:

Youth Solutions

Funded by:



In 2004, Wests League Club Campbelltown funded the highly successful Macarthur Youth Drug Forum involving nine high schools from the Macarthur region.

Participants of the Forum expressed a strong desire to further their skill development in the area of youth drug prevention resulting in the School Solutions Project.

The Project aimed to further increase both young people and their schools capacity to address youth drug issues by utilising a whole of school approach.

Participating schools formed School Action Teams who were trained to undertake a needs assessment of their schools youth drug issues.

Following the needs assessment, each school analysed results and recommendations drawn from the assessment at a two day residential forum – Camp Strategy.

As a result of Camp Strategy, each school developed an action plan which was subsequently implemented to address their prioritised areas of concern.



Brainstorming exercise

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Objectives

1. Increase schools capacity to support outcomes of the Macarthur Youth Drug Forum held in 2004 and subsequent Forums
2. Provide further significant opportunities for young people who attended the 2004 Youth Drug Forum to apply their drug prevention skills at a school level
3. Development of group facilitation and management skills
4. Identification of drug related issues and strategies by young people in their school community
5. Development of partnerships between schools
6. Establishment of peer drug education networks
7. Stakeholder involvement in determining issues, strategies and desired outcomes, as well as identifying the extent to which the school is ready for change
8. Establishment of a whole of school Advisory Group
9. Initiation of sustainable action at the school level
10. Increase in knowledge and understanding of drug issues by young people, parents, teaching staff of youth alcohol and other drug related issues
11. Increase in skill level to deliver school based preventative drug education

Project Implementation

Project Stages



Liaison with Regional DET Staff regarding proposed project

Liaison with Regional Department of Education and Training (DET) representatives commenced in March 2005. The Regional DET Drug Education Consultant was consulted with regards to the proposed content, timeframe and structure of the project. Ongoing communication with the Regional DET resulted in elements of the project being negotiated and amended.

Presentation to 2004 Youth Drug Forum School Principals

During March 2005, all nine 2004 Macarthur Youth Drug Forum school Principal's were provided with an opportunity to meet with the School Solutions Project Coordinator to hear about the opportunity for involvement in this exciting initiative. Of the nine schools, six agreed to participate in the School Solutions Project.

Information Session for School Staff

A two hour information session was held in May 2005 where individual school staff members nominated for involvement in the project were provided with details of the project and information regarding the establishment of their School Action Teams (SAT). School Action Teams were proposed to consist of:

- Student representatives (some of whom may have attended the 2004 Youth Drug Forum)
- Parent representatives
- Executive staff representative/s
- Teaching staff representative/s – if possible, the contact teacher from the 2004 Youth Drug Forum

Project Launch

The School Solutions Project was officially launched during half time at the Wests Tigers vs Cronulla Sharks Friday night game on 10 June 2005. Fifty young people including students from participating schools assisted in distributing promotional products from the field during half time. A large promotional cheque was also presented to Youth Solutions from Wests League Club Campbelltown representatives.

Needs Assessment Training for School Action Teams

A full day of training was held in June 2005 for participating School Action Teams. Training covered the proposed outcomes of the Project with a focus on how each school would gather relevant information from their school communities using the needs assessment tools, ie surveys.

Target Groups: Students (Yr 7—Yr 12, Teaching Staff, Executive Staff, Parents and Ancillary Staff). Each target group was asked questions in order to gather information on the following:

- Student Drug Use
- Policy
- Drug Education Programs
- Parents
- Professional Development for Teachers (NB: students and parents were not asked to comment on staff professional development)
- Drug & Alcohol Help and Information

Data Collation & Analysis

Data collation and analysis was an enormous job for this project. It involved collation of all the gathered information and extensive analysis of the needs of each participating school. Common themes were identified as well as specific needs of the various target groups, for example - need of parents. Once the key issues were determined, a range of recommendations targeting these needs were drafted for each schools consideration. The recommendations were presented as a summary report to each SAT at Camp Strategy for analysis.

Examples of key themes/recommendations identified through the Needs Assessment include:

- The majority of students felt that drug education lessons at their school are helpful
- Parents require more information about drug related issues
- Alcohol, tobacco and cannabis were identified by all target groups across all schools as being the three drugs that cause the most problems amongst young people
- Overall, whole school communities require more education with regards to school policies addressing drug issues
- Some schools need to increase the level of professional development in the area of alcohol and other drugs that is available to their staff
- Overwhelmingly, parents feel comfortable talking to their teenage children about a range of issues however the level of comfort most often decreases when the topic is drug related issues
- A number of schools are very competent in consulting with and involving their student body in issues that affect their school, and should aim to maintain that involvement
- Generally, awareness of the whole school communities needs to be increased with regards to services available to help with drug and alcohol help and information

Camp Strategy

Six High School Action Teams attended the two day residential Forum. Each SAT consisted of Executive Staff, Parents, Students and Teachers. During the residential forum they undertook the following processes:

1. Review data analysis
2. Identify strengths and weaknesses
3. Identify areas for priority action
4. Develop school action plan
5. Present action plan to all participants and invited guests



Young People at the Project Launch - Campbelltown Stadium 10 June 2005



Participants at Camp Strategy - proudly wearing the 'Yes I'm part of the Solution' t-shirts



Group activity



Dramatic representation of Action Plans



“Intrinsically important . . . was the participation of whole school communities”

Implementation of Action

Each SAT implemented at least 75% of their School Action Plan. Specific examples of some of the actions implemented within schools include:

- School drug policy based on Departmental Guidelines and individual school practices developed, implemented and communicated
- Monthly updates provided for teaching and executive staff regarding drug issues
- School newsletters utilised as communication method regarding school drug issues
- Design and distribution of resources for students eg information included in yearly diary (provided by school), wallet sized info cards
- Support workbooks designed and implemented for students involved in drug related incidents eg found smoking at school
- Parent drug and alcohol information sessions held
- Student drug and alcohol information sessions held
- ‘Fast Facts’ regarding alcohol and other drug issues announced during daily notices
- A number of schools continue to maintain their SAT beyond the life of the School Solutions Project

Evaluation

Process evaluation was undertaken at varying points throughout the Project with overwhelmingly positive results. Evaluations included:

- Pre and post evaluation of the Needs Assessment Training for School Action Teams
- Pre and post evaluation of Camp Strategy
- Intermittent evaluation of Action Plan Implementation progress
- Final evaluation following the completion of the School Solutions Project

Reflections

Intrinsically important to the School Solutions Project was the participation of whole school communities. As with many projects the success of School Solutions relied heavily on the individuals involved from both Youth Solutions as well as the School perspective. It is essential that School Drug Issues be viewed in an wholistic and systemised manner in order to achieve appropriate and sustainable outcomes.

Youth Solutions

Youth Solutions is a non Government, community based, youth drug prevention charity, established to:

- Provide the Macarthur and Wingecarribee regions of NSW, Australia, with a specialist resource in youth drug and alcohol prevention
- Develop and maintain drug and alcohol health promotion activities, in an effort to; prevent or reduce drug related harm among young people

Youth Solutions is a unique service, which aims to prevent drug related tragedies. Our service believes that each young person deserves an opportunity to reach their potential and that drug use takes away that potential. While young people are our primary focus, we also aim to educate, inform and support others who play an important role in their lives.



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