

Engaging and empowering youth with Maine Prevention Services collaboration: Sidekicks at Stratton School

Summary

Staff at Healthy Community Coalition (HCC) leveraged roles within the Maine Youth Action Network (MYAN) and as a District Tobacco Prevention Partner to engage and empower youth at Stratton School to address vaping.

Need

According to 2019 MIYHS data 19.6% of Franklin County middle school students answered yes to having used electronic vapor products and 10.8% of Franklin County Middle School students reported smoking cigars; using electronic vapor products or used chewing tobacco, snuff, dip or dissolvable tobacco products one or more of the past 30 days.



Program Description

Effective youth engagement initiatives utilize youth-adult partnerships, and cultivate youth as effective partners in interventions. To engage with youth and schools in Franklin County HCC staff use the Center for Tobacco Independence (CTI) Sidekicks program; a curriculum used to train youth to have respectful conversation about tobacco use and other risky behaviors, with their peers. The Sidekicks programs include education on the dangers of nicotine use and the effects of addiction and introduces motivational interviewing skills like active listening, that are adaptable to a number of issues youth face. A Sidekicks training was facilitated at Stratton Elementary School in collaboration with Maine Youth Action Network (MYAN) staff, the week of March 21st with 7th and 8th grade students. Upon completion of the training, the group was eager and wanted to apply the skills that they learned.



"I am personally a big fan of the SideKicks curriculum, but I believe a follow up and an opportunity to reapply the skills learned is imperative. I'm glad Stratton was interested in doing this activity, and it was actually the kids who wanted to make it happen. They had a lot of fun, and the videos came out great! I'm also excited that the school wants to post these on their website to help educate peers and expand skills/education outside the group."

- Jason Labbe, Western District Youth Coordinator

Results

Two weeks after the Sidekicks training, MYAN staff returned to the school to facilitate a video activity. Students broke out into two groups to complete a video activity to accomplish the following:

- Educate the school community on the dangers of vaping.
- Promote the "Maine Quitlink" and "My Life My Quit".
- Roleplay scenes utilizing active listening skills and effective support with a peer addicted to nicotine.

The school plans to release these videos as a PSA on their website.

Sustainability

As a result of this collaboration, the young people involved in the program were able to effectively apply the skills introduced in the Sidekicks Curriculum. This project took place two weeks after completing the training, this helped to reinforce the information and skills learned. The group was able to utilize a platform to communicate what they learned with other young people in the school community about tobacco use, lay out the dangers of vaping, and promote help seeking behaviors. Creating these videos amplified the youth participant's internal skills, leadership skills, and confidence. Staff were able to cultivate young people as partners to help make a difference in their communities.

For More Information Contact Us At:

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