Stepping Up: Reducing Dating Violence
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Introduction

Purpose: To develop, implement, and evaluate a peer facilitated dating violence prevention program for post-secondary students. The project occurred in two phases:

Process
- Phase I (fall 2010) – recruitment, training of peer facilitators; involvement of external partners; participant recruitment
- Phase II – (in progress) implement program, student projects, evaluations

Participant outcomes:
- Increased knowledge (e.g. healthy vs. unhealthy vs. abusive relationships)
- Changes in attitudes towards violence
- Changes in behaviour or behavioural intentions (e.g. increased willingness to know how and when to intervene as a bystander)
- Completion of prevention projects

Methods

Phase I
- Adaptation of successful high school curriculum on healthy relationships (Making Waves/Value par vague, A Partners for Youth Project from New Brunswick)
- A team of 16 student facilitators, 4 faculty researchers and 2 community partners (Calgary Sexual Health Centre and the Canadian Red Cross RespectED Violence Prevention program) worked to identify key concepts in for university students to form relevant and interactive modules for each of 4 areas:
  - Healthy Relationships;
  - Sexual Relationships;
  - Boundaries and Communications; and
  - Gender and Media Stereotypes
- Guests were brought in to planning to share their expertise:
  - Julie Rioux Maier, National Coordinator, Making Waves
  - Anne Troy, creator of Girls Not Gone Wild (sexual assault prevention).

Phase II
Participants attended a 3 day prevention weekend Jan. 28-30, 2011.

Measures
- Dating violence relationship scale (pre & 8 months)
- Knowledge, Attitudes & Behaviour/Behavioural Intent (KABBI)(pre,post 8 mos)
- Module evaluations (immediately post)
- Project evaluations (project completion, focus groups with peer facilitators)

Prevention Projects
Participants were asked to complete prevention projects at MRU between Feb. and April, 2011. Peer facilitators met monthly with participants to support the development and completion of projects.

Ethics Approval
This project was approved by the Human Research Ethics Board at MRU.

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Results & Discussion

Demographics
In total, 30 students completed all or part of the Dating Relationship scale.
- Predominantly women (66.7%) and single (70%)
- 63% white, 1/3 diverse ethnicities
- Age range 19 to 57 years
- 24% <24 years (43%); 25 to 29 yrs (33%)

Violence in Dating relationships:
- 48.1% verbal abuse (sometimes/ often/always)
- 44.7% witnessed abuse or violence in home as children

Module Evaluations

Modules rated on 5 point scale (above) with positive results
Participants liked:
- the opportunity to talk with others, peer facilitators, videos that were used in the modules, learning about resources, and the role plays.

Participants recommended:
- more time for each module, more discussion, less role playing, different videos, and the need for concrete tools.

Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour/Behavioural Intent (KABBI)
Among those who completed both the pre and post KABBI (n=11) mean scores improved for knowledge in all key areas, especially knowledge of community domestic violence resources, sexual assault resources, knowing how to intervene, and personal boundaries. The KABBI will be repeated at 8 months.

Peer Facilitator Feedback
The concept of peers supporting peers is central to the project.
Facilitators will be asked about their experiences, successes, and challenges in supporting students.

Prevention Projects
Participants continued to meet post program with their peer facilitators and small groups of participants to plan and implement prevention projects for the MRU community. Projects include posters, T-shirts, buttons, brochures, radio advertisements.

Next Steps
A second pilot is planned September 2012 incorporating findings from this study.

For More Information
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