Peer Listening: Teaching Students to Support Each Other

Roshelle Kades
Graduate Assistant
Goucher College
My Background and Information

• B.A., Sociology and Women’s Studies, Goucher College
• Acquiring M.A., Cultural Sustainability, Goucher College
• Currently Graduate Assistant in Office of Community Living at Goucher College
  ▫ E-mail: rkades@goucher.edu
  ▫ Phone: (410)769-5088
  ▫ Twitter: @ListenProject
The Need: A Few Statistics

- **One in Four** versus official institutional reports
- College student emotional health=lowest in 25 years (Lewin 2011)
- Strong social support connected with low depression rates(Heffner and Eisenberg 2009)
- Students disclose to peers first 70% of the time, (Banyard et al. 2009)
- Up to 75% of survivors may receive some form of negative reactions from peers upon disclosure (Ahrens 2006)
First Steps: Proposal and Gaining Support

- Independent Study
- Administrative support and collaboration
- Cohort group research: “let’s not reinvent the wheel”: Bard, UMD, St. Mary’s
- Expansion beyond sexual assault
Modifying the Wheel

Ears

Eyes

Attention

Heart
Modifying the Wheel, cont.

• **Mission Statement:** *Goucher College’s Peer Listening Program* is a network of trained students available to any peer in need of a listener. Peer Listeners’ main responsibilities are to listen non-judgmentally and to refer effectively. The priority is to provide a supplemental support system to students, specifically regarding but not limited to those who are survivors of sexual violence. A dual aim is to bridge the gaps between students, student issues, and professional involvement.

• **Vision Statement:** Our vision is to use the power of non-judgmental listening to allow for connectedness, trust, and open dialogue to surface within the community being served.
Fall 2010: Building the Pilot

- Policy and protocol
- Funding
- Student recruitment and selection
- Training and manual creation
- Key in each step: collaboration and cross campus investment
Policy and Protocol

- Hours
- Phone v. face to face
- Supervision
- Meetings
- Documentation
  - [www.formstack.com](http://www.formstack.com)
Policy and Protocol cont.: Confidentiality and Crises

- Privacy v. confidentiality
- Crisis signs: physical danger, medical attention, mental health concern
- Non Crisis Forms of referral
  - Staff Action
  - Peer Action
Funding

- Funding needed for training costs, marketing initiatives, and on call cell phone
- Grants
  - Innovation Grant
  - SGA Social Justice Grant
- Office donations
- What helped our ability to acquire funding?
  - Many on campus staff and faculty members were already invested in the program’s success
  - There was a strong call to action and an easy ask
Student Recruitment and Application

- Recruitment: Addressing the community
  - Community e-mail from Dean of Students
  - Flyers
  - Classroom presentations

- Application

- Interview: Involving the community

- Final working choice
  - Conditional acceptance into the program
Planning Training

• 50+ hours of training for five days before spring semester
• Collaboration with on and off campus professionals
• Categories of training activities
  ▫ Lecture based/informational
  ▫ Activity based/skills sessions
  ▫ Conversation based/conceptual
  ▫ Reflection based/self care activities
The Importance of Training

- Setting the tone
- Information and skills practice
- Team building
- Accessing resources
- Creating momentum
Spring 2011: Launching the Pilot

- Marketing efforts
- Weekly meetings
- Ongoing trainings
- Calls
- Key in each step: Communication with peer listeners and nurturing PL investment
Fall 2011: Roll Out

- Increased focus on visibility on campus
  - Orientation
  - Suicide Awareness Week and How to Help a Friend
  - Connections program support
- Higher call volume
- Group dynamics
- New questions for next stage of policy/protocol, funding, student recruitment, and training
Peer Listener Outcomes

Taken from the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education “Learning and Developmental Outcomes”

• Interpersonal competence
  ▫ Meaningful relationships
  ▫ Interdependence
  ▫ Collaboration
  ▫ Effective leadership

• Humanitarianism and Civic Engagement
  ▫ Understanding/appreciation of cultural and human differences
  ▫ Social responsibility

• Practical competence
  ▫ Managing personal affairs
  ▫ Managing health and wellness
  ▫ Living a purposeful and satisfying life

• Intrapersonal development
  ▫ Identity development
  ▫ Commitment to ethics and integrity
Spring 2012: Looking for Sustainability

- Emphasis on peer listener ownership
  - Peer leaders/mentors
  - Brainstorm and assignment of various tasks
- Sustainable funding
- Modifying training, protocol, and manual
- Long term thinking
  - Peer education
  - Credit for training
What Sets Goucher’s Peer Listening Program Apart?
“Listening is a magnetic and strange thing, a creative force. The friends who listen to us are the ones we move toward. When we are listened to, it creates us, makes us unfold and expand.”- Karl A. Menninger
References


• Heffner, Jennifer and Daniel Eisenberg. 2009. “Social Support and Mental Health Among College Students.” American Journal of Orthopsychiatry. 79: 491-499.

Contact Information and...

- E-mail: rkades@goucher.edu
- Phone: (410)769-5088
- Twitter: @ListenProject, #listenmore

...Questions?