



Successful Healthway Projects

Health Education Liaison People (HELP) Committee

The HELP Committee at Mandurah High School involved students from Years 8 to 10. The Committee aimed to raise awareness of health issues and improve physical and mental health within the Mandurah High School community.

Case Study
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Health Education Liaison People (HELP) Committee

Organisation:	Mandurah High School
Healthway funding:	\$300 (Funded: Newsletter, health weeks, competitions and guest speakers)
Program period:	10 months
Year:	1996
Target group:	Students, teachers, parents and general school community
Number of participants:	1,300 students, 100 teachers and other community members

What was the project about?

The HELP Committee, an initiative of Mandurah High School, began with seven students from Years 8-10. The Committee aimed to raise awareness of health issues and improve physical and mental health within the Mandurah High School community. One of its major activities was to produce a health newspaper to promote health messages and communicate Committee activities to students, teachers, parents and the wider school community. The Committee also initiated the state-wide Youth on Health Drama Festival.

Through fundraising, the Committee adapted and extended state health promotion campaigns, provided on-campus health displays, cheap healthy breakfasts for students and environmental structures such as murals and smoke detectors.

What strategies were used?

- The Committee produced a newspaper, the "Health Courier", to provide health information and promote their activities.
- The newspaper was distributed to students, teachers and other school staff, and to the local hospital, community health service and the Health Matters information centre in the local shopping centre.
- The Committee raised money through auctions and raffles for other health-related activities and issues including the purchase of smoke alarms, Daffodil Day and Red Nose Day.
- Cheap, healthy breakfasts were provided daily to students.
- The Committee's activities were promoted through flyers distributed throughout the school.
- The Smarter than Smoking (STS) Campaign was promoted and STS murals were painted throughout the school.

- Committee members were trained to counsel students who smoked and a teacher in-service was organised to deal with students' smoking.
- The Committee organised and coordinated a state-wide Youth on Health Drama Festival, focussing on HIV/AIDS. Guest judges were present and prize money awarded for outstanding performances.

What did the project achieve?

- By the end of the funding period, the Committee was well known, with approximately 600 Health Courier newspapers distributed throughout the school and wider community.
- The final number of committee members reached 26, with 100 students on the waiting list to join.
- The Committee was dedicated to taking responsibility for and expanding its activities to improve the health status of students and the wider community.
- The group's work was awarded an ACHPER Governor's award for excellence in school health and committee members received school excellence awards.

What the coordinator of "Health Education Liaison People" had to say about the project:

Young people were seen as the face of the project; therefore they felt ownership of the health issues.

The person driving the project must be willing to advocate and push for the project, have a good rapport with young people and allow students to make decisions for themselves.

The Youth on Health Drama Festival has now become a state-wide youth project. It originated from a committee of seven students at Mandurah High School and is now an incorporated organisation in its own right.

What Were the Effective Health Promotion Elements?

1 PLANNING

The HELP Committee was guided by a committed and hard-working Coordinator, the School Nurse.

Students were responsible for developing the funding application as well as identifying the priorities, health issues to target and planning the activities.

Organisations consulted during planning included:

- The Peel Health Service.
- Health Matters (health information service located in Mandurah Forum).

Prior to developing the funding application students attended training sessions at the Health Matters shop to increase their understanding of the health issues and to develop skills in problem solving and conflict resolution.

2 IMPLEMENTATION

The Committee was responsible for the implementation of all strategies.

A key strategy was the production of the Health Courier newspaper, which provided information on health issues and improving health, the activities of the Committee and achievements of students and teachers.

Other activities included:

- Cheap, healthy breakfasts available daily.
- Organising fun, health-focussed events.
- Developing and implementing health displays and campaigns.
- Fundraising activities such as auctions and raffles to support other activities.
- The coordination of a state-wide Youth on Health Drama Festival.
- Articles in the school newsletter and the Mandurah Telegraph paper.

The main focus was to create a supportive school environment that discouraged unhealthy behaviours such as smoking, and promoted healthy lifestyles.

3 EVALUATION

Evaluation occurred through:

- Feedback from the school community.
- The number of students who wanted to join the HELP Committee at the end compared with the start of the project.
- Record keeping, including the number of newspapers disseminated.
- Recognition of the Committee by students, teachers and parents.
- Awards received by the Committee including the ACPHER Governor's Award for Excellence in School Health.

4 SUSTAINABILITY

The members committed to continuing the Committee after the Healthway funding ended and many students wanted to join.

Fundraising events have enabled the activities to be self-sustaining.

The school community and the Town Council supported the project to continue.

A commitment was made by the Town Council to continue to promote Smarter Than Smoking messages in local bus shelters.

What lessons were learned?

- Student involvement at all stages of the project creates ownership and motivation among the student population.
- Student ownership of the project generates dedication and intent to see the project succeed, grow and be sustained.
- Complementary fundraising activities are important to resource additional activities.



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