Stand Together: A Social Change, Peer-to-Peer Model to Stop Stigma by Promoting Positive Change in Schools

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#standtogether

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Stand Together is an initiative that inspires and equips youth to take action against stigma associated with mental illness and substance use disorders.
Presentation Objectives

Participants will be able to:

• start a Stand Together chapter utilizing the Stand Together curricula;
• utilize evaluation tools to collect data to demonstrate its effectiveness;
• list at least three strategies for starting and funding an anti-stigma program.
Nationally:

1 in 4 students experience mental illness and substance use disorders → 25-44% of kids drop out of school → 2/3 of students don’t receive treatment
Anti-stigma research tells us...

- Most anti-stigma efforts are short-term
- Initial changes are not sustained
Anti-stigma research tells us...

• Countering myths is important

• Direct contact with a person who has lived experience is more effective in changing stigmatizing attitudes
Stand Together goals:

• Increase education and awareness
• Promote inclusion
• Encourage adolescents to reach out to a trusted adult
Adult Advisors

- One or two per school
- Volunteer, personal interest
- Positive relationship with students
- Orientation-2 hr.
- Select students (20)
Program Workshops:

• Day 1:
  • Education
  • First-person narrative
  • Cross the Line

• Day 2:
  • Brainstorming
  • Project planning
  • Goal emphasis
Technical Assistance

- Paperwork
- Support
- Site visits
- YMHFA
Website

Stand Together is a student-to-student initiative that inspires and equips youth to take action against stigma associated with mental illness and substance use disorders. Allegheny County’s Office of Behavioral Health is engaging area middle and high school students throughout Allegheny County by providing anti-stigma training and service learning experiences. Students work to stand together to increase education and awareness, increase social inclusion, and encourage adolescents to talk to an adult if they are concerned about their own or another student’s mental health.

Students
Students design and implement student-to-student projects in their schools to stop stigma.

Advisors
Adult leaders oversee the students work and work with other school staff and administration.

Trainers
This is an optional role. Trainers are external staff that lead the workshops and oversee the operation.
Social Media
Three tiers:

- Increasing levels of commitment
- Students must consider:
  - Reach
  - Impact
  - Budgets
  - Facilitation
  - Leadership
  - Marketing
- Soft skills
Tiers 1 & 2:

- Pre-designed toolkits
- Set budgets
- Focus on specific goals
Tier 3: Student-Designed Projects

- Mini-grant writing process
- Focus on all 3 goals in at least 3 projects
- Up to $1000 funding
West Allegheny High School
West Allegheny High School

- Largest district (geographically) of the 42 school systems in AC
- 1024 students
- Post-graduation:
  - 4-year institution: 71%
  - 2-year institution: 19%
  - Military: 4%
  - Employment: 6%
The Evolution of the Team

• 2016-2017 school year: Mental Health team
• Summer 2017: Stand Together initial meeting
• Fall 2017: meetings with district administration and parents
WA Stand Together team

- Student services chose students
  - Diversity
  - Leadership
- Parent meeting
- Final group: 22 students, grades 9-12
Goal 1: Educate School Environment

- Articles
- Newsletters
- Posters
Goal 1: Educate
School Chorus Concert

- ‘You Will Be Found’-Dear Evan Hansen (musical)
- Stand Together students shared facts about mental illness and stigma during an instrumental break
Educate: Introductory Assembly

It is okay to be yourself.
Goal 2: Social Inclusion ‘Stick It to Stigma!’

- Based on 5 gum’s ‘Truth or Dare’
  - Truths about mental illness
  - Dares—acts of kindness to help or include others
- The Stand Together team itself is one of the most diverse groups in school
Goal 3: Ask-an-Adult

HerSHEy Kiss Stigma Goodbye!

- How to ask for help
  - Student him/herself
  - Someone else
- Who to ask for help
  - ‘trusted adults’
  - examples
- How to help others

Help is ALWAYS available!
Cookie Give-away!

- ‘Chip Away Stigma’ (Chips Ahoy)
  - Ways to reduce stigma
- ‘Oreo Ready?’ (Oreos)
  - Mental health/stigma scenarios
- Animals for Awareness (animal crackers)
  - Mental health awareness
Final Assembly

- Jeopardy game focusing on:
  - Mental health awareness
  - How to reduce stigma
- Recovery speaker
Personal Testimony: Jake

- Living with Mental Illness: A Day in the Life
- Speaking Out
- How Stand Together has impacted me
Overall Impact

- Students confiding in one another regarding mental illness/therapy
- Student seeking out ST students to take them to guidance
- Students report that their peers are using less stigmatizing language
- Staff exposure to events brought increased awareness
Data

- Quantitative and Qualitative Data
- Wahl Survey
Where Stand Together Demonstrates the Most Positive Impact — Improvement in Knowledge

Legend:
- Purple: FY 2013-14
- Teal: FY 2014-15
- Green: FY 2015-16

Conclusion:
Stand Together increases student knowledge about mental illness. Stand Together students display increased knowledge about mental illness myths and facts as illustrated by these two questions.

Survey statements demonstrating the most positive change in knowledge:
- People who have had mental illness include astronauts, presidents, and famous baseball players.
- Psychological therapy (e.g., talking to a psychologist or counselor) is a useful way to treat mental illness.
School Years 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16
Where Stand Together Demonstrates the Most Positive Impact—Improvement in Attitude

Survey statements demonstrating the most positive change in attitude

Conclusion:
Stand Together impacts student attitudes toward mental illness. Students' attitudes toward people with mental illness improve during their participation in Stand Together as illustrated by these questions.
School Years 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16

Where Stand Together Demonstrates the Most Positive Impact—Improvement in Social Inclusion

Conclusion:
Stand Together changes attitudes toward social inclusion. Over the course of their participation in Stand Together, students display an increased desire to engage with peers who have mental illnesses as indicated by these statements.

Survey statements demonstrating the most positive change in social inclusion:
What do schools tell us?

- Stand Together has changed the culture in their school
- Students talk more openly about mental health challenges—it isn’t a taboo subject
- Students are reaching out for help
- Students thank Stand Together members
- Students are more aware of their language
Initiating Strategies

- Student/family
- Teacher/mental health professional
- Mental health teams
- Foundations
- Government/Mental Health entities
Funding Strategies

- Foundations
- MH programs
- Grants from federal, state or local MH/D&A or Education funding entities
- Corporate Sponsors
- FUNdraising
- School Budget
Contact us!

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http://standtogether.againststigma.org

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