

A Guide to Growing POSSE



Peer Outreach Support Services & Education (POSSE) ©

47 Mill Street East

Acton, ON L7J 1H1

This manual is funded through the Halton Healthy Community Fund

Feedback Form

To help us improve this *Guide* over time and let us know where POSSE may be emerging elsewhere in Canada, please take a moment to complete this form and send it to us. Mail to: POSSE Project, 47 Mill Street East, Acton, ON L7J 1H1 or fax to 519-853-3510. Thanks!

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Gender: Male _____ Female _____ Other _____

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If yes, could you please keep us informed about how things progress and provide your contact information below or on the back of this page:

Peer Reviews of A Guide to Growing POSSE

The POSSE Manual is an incredibly insightful and well thought out "how-to-manual" not only for those interested in starting their own POSSE project but for anyone who truly wishes to work with youth in an empowering and meaningful way. It helps prepare those truly willing to make the journey with youth or those willing to make the journey with adults for the process that we must all be willing to collaboratively create.

Collaborative members need to be willing to take risks; programming for curious, at-risk and adventurous youth can sometimes be unpopular in a community or lead to situations with the potential for conflict. Good risks are worth taking, and Collaborative members should be willing to take these good risks with programming and other POSSE activities.

An especially important highlight is the willingness of both youth and adults to be mutually trained in how to work with each other. A definite resource material for those committed to making the word "empowerment" real.

Charis Romilly, M.S.W.

Finally! A comprehensive and accessible guide for creating a youth-driven, community based, peer-support project has been developed. This manual is an excellent resource for youth and adults alike. For youth who want to start this type of project, this manual provides concrete advice on the whole process, from the ground up. For adults who want to be involved in such a process, this manual clearly outlines the philosophy and process behind youth-driven and peer-support initiatives so that adults can be meaningful collaborators.

Creating a truly youth-driven initiative is challenging because the very organization of such a project challenges the status-quo. Concepts like youth-driven, peer-support and harm reduction are still on the margins of our society. Projects like POSSE are important for bringing these concepts and practices into the centre. And why is this important? Because these types of initiatives work and POSSE shows us how.

When people are able to contribute in a meaningful and concrete way to the creation of a community based, youth driven initiative, real, positive change happens. This is where the POSSE project shines. What makes POSSE exceptional is that everyone involved is an equal collaborator; it demonstrates that 'community' is what drives youth-driven, peer-support initiatives. I would definitely recommend this manual to anyone working on "Growing POSSE."

Marika Albert, M.A.

"Fools rush in where angels fear to tread"

There are infinite and legitimate reasons agencies, communities, governments and funders are reluctant or downright refuse to support innovative peer based youth programs--particularly for marginalized youth. It is far easier for those of us who make policy, run agencies or work in programs to talk and write about them, research them, medicate them, institutionalize them, and if necessary--imprison them. Why take the risk of talking with and learning from youth? How can we honour youth voices, choices, and knowledge when we disagree or do not approve?

Because it works. The only way we can have safe and inclusive communities is to create them.

The folks in the Posse Project and the members of the community who set aside trepidation to create a safe and supportive space for youth have gone where angels fear to tread. The documentation of the journey, trials, tribulations, lessons learned and taught, speaks of another level of courage. It speaks truth to the lie that it cannot be done. The Posse Manual is testimony that at least one rural Ontario region is far ahead of many urban centres.

Randi-Lee Taylor
Vancouver

Peer-education and peer support have emerged as best practices recognized globally as effective ways to improve health and well being of communities, particularly communities that more traditional services often find hard to reach such as street involved or high risk youth. The POSSE manual does such a thorough job of covering all of its bases, from general principles to nitty-gritty operation details, that it is sure to be of value to both seasoned veterans of peer outreach programs and those who are just thinking about starting one up. The sheer size, along with the high level of detail, may be intimidating, especially for younger readers but the presentation is highly visual, the language easy to absorb, and manual is modular so it can be separated into less daunting pieces. I would like to see this manual widely circulated.

Theo Rosenfeld

Peer Outreach Support Services & Education (POSSE)
WINNER OF THE ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION - GREAT GRANT
AWARD for PEEL/HALTON 2007
Peer Outreach Support Services & Education (POSSE)

Gift of Gratitude

I can not begin the acknowledgements at the birth of POSSE, for that would be acknowledging the tree branches without paying homage to its roots. I will start with the seed where the development began and work my way upward.

Peer Outreach Support Services & Education (POSSE) was the inspiration of a group of youth following a one year grant for the North Halton - Hepatitis C Prevention Project funded by Health Canada. Without first the visioning of Jean Clipsham, Cecil McDougall, Cate Bannan at the Halton Region Health Department HIV/AIDS Sexual Health Clinic and Needle Exchange Program; in partnership with Joan Barham, of then Halton Hills Community Support & Information (HHCSI), now Links2Care, I would not be here writing these acknowledgements. It is a result of these dynamic people that I was hired for the Hepatitis C Project, which, as I said, led to the birth and growth of POSSE. Thanks for your ongoing support, guidance and vision! Jean, Cecil and Cate - you three are a part of POSSE's foundation! P.S. Cecil, the supplies help too!

Domenic Padula, my partner, friend and colleague -for the countless volunteer hours you gave to both the North Halton Youth - Hepatitis C Project and to POSSE because you believe in youth and because you care! For the hours of our personal life spent dreaming and planning for POSSE, waiting for me to get off the phone with a youth in crisis, dropping off some supplies to a youth in need on a day off, picking youth up when I was unavailable - all of this before you ever worked for POSSE! Thank for your understanding (most days) and your LOVE!

A lengthy and direct phone call with Tanja Schlabitz brought some youth and me from the Hepatitis C Project to the steering committee for The Truth About Youth. Tanja was open to meaningful youth engagement and offered Britnie Mousseau, Carley Doell, Rachel Cumby, & Jesse Gibson a chance to shine and make meaningful contributions to the community through the Truth About Youth! The Truth About Youth gave our work a forum for recognition and I believe, assisted us in receiving our first start up grant through Halton Healthy Community Fund. It is at the Truth About Youth that I first had the pleasure of meeting Jody Orr, who throughout the years has been a colleague and friend of POSSE. Jody thanks for facilitating Open Space at 3 youth / police forums, the Evaluation Plan, Sustainability Plan, and The Best Practices Manual. Thanks for believing in what we do and helping it become a successful model for all youth - everywhere!

A special thanks to the youth in the Hep C project, who helped develop the concept of POSSE, namely Britnie Mousseau, Carley Doell, Chris Golden, Jeff McBean, Jon Thompson, Heather Clark, Chris Codiero, and Mandy Morrow - bet you never thought your ideas would

make it here! An extra appreciation to Britnie and Carley for continuing on into POSSE's first year and staying on for 3 years sharing your dedication and vision!

Youth Participants – Past and Present
(They REALLY MAKE POSSE and the UNDERCROFT!)

These are the youth who were hired to receive honoraria or have volunteered extensive amounts of time over the past 4 years of POSSE, it does not include every youth who has volunteered for the project or participated in training. There have been 147 different youth who have participated in POSSE training over the years - all of whom have helped make POSSE successful!

Amanda Dwyer	Chantal Kim Rees
Amanda Gill	Kristie Mueller
Bobbi Gower	Lily Watson
Britnie Mousseau	Lyndsey Hole
Carley Doell	Maureen Harvey
Catey Saunders	Melissa Paul
Chris Golden	Mike Cook
Claire Tremblay	Mike Mands
Danielle Blair	Rachel Cumby
Delta Hillyard	Sammy Cutting
Eric Balch	Sam Pop
Erin Dowling	Sean Hansen
Jake Armstrong	Teri Doell
Jason Ribau	Tom Beedham
Jenn Berry	Tony Plowman
Kelly-Ann MacGillvray	Tyler Longhurst
Kelsey Harford	Zack
Kevin Freer	

Zachary Moore for your awesome POSSE graffiti art!
Tom Beedham for the final touches and graphics to this manual!

Thanks to all of the artists and writers of the UNDERCROFT, over 60 and growing!
Your work is amazing!

Donna Danielli - Halton District School Board Trustee, reporter and wonderful mentor for the UNDERCROFT, you have been a great resource and an awesome friend. Your work with the youth has fostered trust and respect in their work and their relationship with you and the larger community.

Thanks to all of the youth who volunteered for the Welcoming Diversity Days who may have been missed here.

All of the youth I have ever known through POSSE, YOU are amazing young people, of whom I have been privileged to know! You have ALL made a HUGE difference in your community and deserve all the praise I can put on this piece of paper! RESPECT!

James MacDonald - Humber College Student for doing your student placement with us in our first year of POSSE development, going through the tough conversations and growing pains.

Founding Adult Collaborative Members

Present:

Jean Clipsham - Halton Region Health Department HIV/AIDS Sexual Health Clinic

Heather Cook - ROCK (Reach Out Centre for Kids)

Jennifer Speers - ADAPT

Judy Scannell - North Halton Cultural Awareness Council

Claire Langridge - Parent /Youth Support Coordinator

Last but definitely not least: Kim Paton and Brian Warrington - AIDS Committee of Guelph and Wellington County - POSSE's lead agency. This agency has allowed us amazing flexibility and autonomy: thank you for trusting us to do our jobs without micromanaging and for being amazing people!

Each of you have been with POSSE since its inception, you have supported the vision and model as POSSE has continued to grow and continues to evolve. You have offered commitment, wisdom, knowledge, training, resources, encouragement, debate, time, healing, and LOVE. You have positively impacted me, Domenic, and every youth who has come through the doors of our collaborative meetings and has had the privilege of meeting each of you. - Welalin! (Thank you!) It has been an honour to work with each of you!

Departed but not forgotten:

Ann Martin - the Ontario HIV/AIDS Network

Murray Jose - formerly the Hamilton AIDS Network

Eileen Walker - Halton Regional Police Services

Catherine Dove - Bridging the Gap Transitions for Youth

New Collaborative Members:

Deborah Stinson - The AIDS Network

Danielle Pomeroy - Halton Regional Police Services

Additional Partner Organizations and Trainers: Donna Danielli - you are a champion for youth, a strong supporter of POSSE and an adult advisor with the Undercroft, thanks for your support and for organizing the 4:20 show! Your ongoing advocacy and encouragement of youth makes a huge impact in their lives - it's wonderful to know you! Halton Organization for Pride and Education (HOPE), Halton Multicultural Council, Sexual Assault Violence Intervention Services (SAVIS), Nina's Place, BJ Caldwell - for sharing with the youth so openly, j Wallace - for your thoughtfulness and breaking the boundaries that conform, Betty-Lou Kristy I honor your love of youth and passion to make right all the wrongs - I honor your late son Pete (Kristy) Beattie (for putting the fire in his mom's belly), Metis Women's Circle, Caribbean Association of Halton, all our other volunteers and supporters that may have been missed by accident -Thanks!

Halton Regional Police Services: Deputy Chief Mike Kingston, as the former superintendent of North Halton, you were the first officer to support POSSE. Inspector Ron Welsh you are a wonderful ally and a great officer, thanks for participating in the all three youth / police forums and assisting our Undercroft writers, in busting the breathalyzer myths, it was truly a fun and informative evening. Former North Halton Superintendent Joe Taylor, thanks for REALLY believing in the potential of the youth and POSSE. You put yourself out there to help make 3 youth/police forums successful! I think you are a great man and a fabulous cop! (You know that's a big compliment right?) smile. Detective Mike Brown for being one of the coolest cops ever! You won the youth over instantly and helped build a bridge between youth and police by being so honest, straightforward and fun! Inspector Jackie Gordon and Sergeant Gary Gold great work with the youth / police relations committee. Nishan Duraiappah diversity officer, thanks for being there to hear our concerns and perspectives - Dom has always thought highly of you - this is no small achievement. Smile! All the police officers who attended the youth / police forums and our Welcoming Diversity Days!

Halton Region Health Department and Social Services: I would like to recognize all the staff at Halton Region not previously mentioned, who I am aware of supporting POSSE's initiatives in various ways, namely: Dr. Bob Nosal (Chief Medical Officer of Health), Adelina Urbanski (Commissioner, Social and Community Services), Marianne Carson (Director, Health Protection Services) and all of the staff at the Sexual Health Clinics. THANKS! Also to the Region of Halton Health and Social Services Committee including Regional Chair Gary Carr: through your support POSSE has received sustainable funding! On behalf of POSSE - THANKS!

Funders and Financial Supporters:

The Ontario Trillium Foundation for granting us \$224,600.00 over three years, giving us the opportunity to succeed! Maggie Fischbuch you have been an excellent program manager, it has been great working with you!

Thanks to the Halton Healthy Community Fund and the allocations committee, for the initial seed funding and your ongoing support for POSSE and all of our initiatives, especially for funding this manual!

Health Canada - Hepatitis C funding, Craig Robinson (I know you went to bat for us - and thanks for the conference in Banff); and Drug Strategies Communities Initiatives Fund - Brain Chalovich and Rane Chambers, you helped us bring forth the UNDERCROFT!

United Way of Milton and Halton Hills ~ Thanks for your support! Susan Lynch you have been great to work with! Kim Robinson - all the best in your endeavours.

Ted Richmond from the Laidlaw Foundation, for taking time to have lunch at least once a year to learn about our latest developments and share your funding guidelines with me. In the process you have become a friend.

Lois Fraser, Fraser Direct Ltd., as a leader in Halton Hills your support of POSSE has been a gift to the youth in the community. You have kept it real and honest by asking, "what would Jesus do?" when people criticized harm reduction and needle exchange. Thanks for your donations and leadership for our Welcoming Diversity Day year one and two - it's awesome to see you in action, moving mountains!

To all the other businesses who have supported us with your sponsorship at various events!

A special note to Margaret Penca of Halton Region, for a phone call you made one day in which you praised POSSE and our work, your timing was impeccable and I am ever so grateful for your encouragement and support. I admire you and your praise means a lot!

To Tammie Ried, Charis Romilly, Randi-Lee Taylor, Marika Albert, and Theo Rosenfeld, my peers and mentors in the world of social inclusion, peer based - youth driven programming, harm reduction and human rights work - each of you have impacted and improved my ability to do this work. I am grateful and fortunate to call each of you "friend", knowing you would never spare me the truth - no matter how hard it may be to take. Thanks for your influence in my life and for taking the time to read, review and critique this manual.

To all of you who know this side of me, you know who you are; thanks for putting up with the moments when fear, grief, sorrow, confusion and frustration were interfering with my ability to be detached from the outcome ~ when love for POSSE and the youth took over my objectivity or touched my heart so deeply I needed to lean on you. I am grateful for your grace, unconditional support and ongoing encouragement!

What would be a thank-you without also thanking my mom? So mom (Dot Rudd) thanks for your commitment to developing a healthy, meaningful relationship with me even when it really hurt. Thanks for caring for Sebastian - allowing me the opportunity to help grow a POSSE here, in the very community I ran from so many years ago. I love you!

To All Our Relations,
Kimm Kent
POSSE Co-Founder, Program Manager / Youth Worker

This Manual has been produced through
the financial support of the
Halton Healthy Community Fund –
thanks, folks!

Kimm, the Program Manager and co-founder of POSSE has, as always, been really generous in her thanks to others, but we need to say thanks to her...

...for the loving and caring that you demonstrate for all youth; for not allowing any form of discrimination and for standing up for all oppressed peoples; for teaching all of us how to be youth-centred; for your passion and commitment; for living your values - and challenging us to live ours....

Kimm, thanks from us all!

Youth, Adults and Friends of POSSE

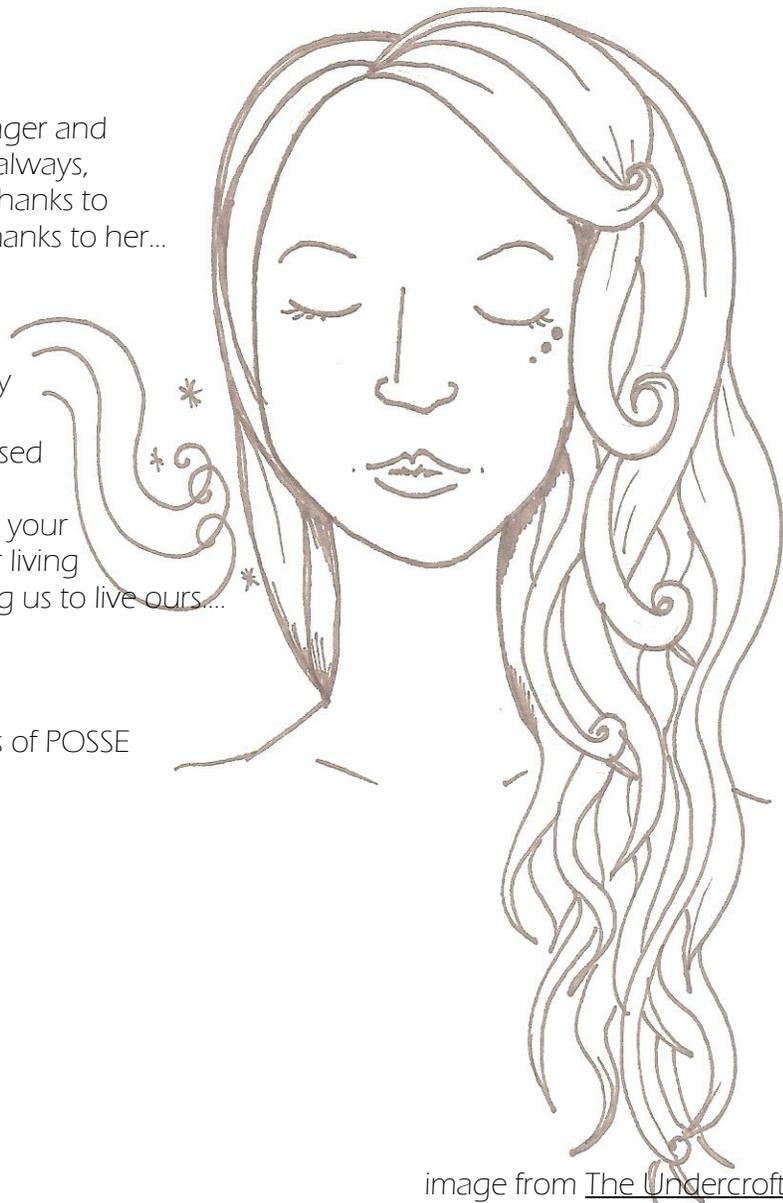


image from [The Undercroft](#)

POSSE Philosophy and Values

All youth have an inherent right to equality, dignity, safety, respect and their basic human rights regardless of age, race, class, gender, sexual orientation, sub-culture, gender identity, abilities and religion or any other distinguishing characteristics.

Youth should be understood as a resource, not a problem.

Change is voluntary and we believe that consistent service, unconditional acceptance, and healthy relationships are imperative in developing a trusting rapport with youth. It is only through this kind of trusting relationship that, when a youth is ready, we will be able to assist in facilitating a transition to a healthier lifestyle. Our experience has been that a youth driven, peer-based model of service provision allows us to serve youth who are reluctant to access "gated" services, increases youth empowerment, and fosters a sense of youth "ownership" of the project

We believe youth have the right to meaningful participation in decision making that affects them personally, politically and programmatically, since youth are experts in their own lives and needs.

We value this expertise and recognize that youth must be consulted with in making decisions that affect their lives, and the services that service them. This means providing financial compensation for their consultation in order to make it possible for youth to afford the time to get involved. We thus provide training opportunities for youth with various levels of responsibility for running the project.

We believe in reducing barriers to service by designing our project to fill the gaps in service provision, by offering a service that is otherwise non-existent in North Halton at this time.

We believe in being a peer-based organization where youth to youth mentorship and skill building is fostered.

Above all of this we believe in providing a chance for the youth driven model to evolve and change, as it will in growing to realize its full potential.

How to Use This Guide

This *Guide* is intended to help you and others to grow a POSSE Project in your own community. It is divided into sections in a way which will help you think through important issues and questions. You will find some repetition so that if you are reading a section on its own, important information which is mentioned elsewhere is repeated. We have, however, tried to keep repetition to a minimum.

We suggest that you do not try to read the *Guide* all at one time. Instead, focus on it section by section. Get comfortable with each section before you move on.

Section 1 describes what POSSE is, what it does and the fundamental values and principles which make POSSE what it is. If you are considering a POSSE Project in your community, you will need to adopt these values and principles as your own - and understand what they mean for what you do.

Section 2 discusses empowerment, what it looks like and the implications for POSSE. Put simply, POSSE is youth-driven. How to do this is described in this section.

Section 3 is the biggest section in the *Guide* and deals with the many steps you have to take to get POSSE up and running in your own community.

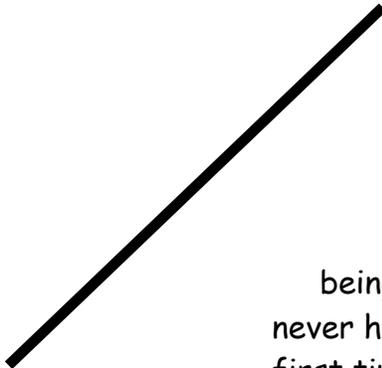
Section 4 deals with finding the right staff for POSSE, a critically important step.

Section 5 will help you set up and use evaluation processes for POSSE. Evaluation is important for making sure POSSE works the way you want it to and for possible funders who will want to know their dollars are being well used.

Section 6, the last section, focuses on finding funding for POSSE.

As you read, take notes, write down questions and think about your own community. What does this *Guide* have to say that can help you as you think about starting a POSSE Project and take steps towards this dream.

Good luck!



From the Front Lines...

being an at risk youth at the age of thirteen, i never have felt safe, loved, respected or equal. the first time that i walked into POSSE meeting, honestly it freaked me out. never have i met a more open minded, non judgmental and respectful group of people. the first night at the meeting/training was the first time that i opened up to anyone about my issues, problems and hard core drug lifestyle. ever since then i have been going back. it has been three years that i have been with POSSE and every time i attend a training even if it is the same one i learn something new, interesting about the issue and about myself. i use to be self conscious, highly depressed and suicidal. going through the trainings and talking to kimm, i worked out most of my issues and with that came an understanding about myself and issues around me. i now thanks to POSSE am a youth outreach worker and helping youth in situations which i have over come and some worse off than myself. i know that with out POSSE i would not be anywhere close to where i am now, and probley would have been back into drugs or not be here at all. the hardest things which i have faced in my life even before POSSE kimm has helped me over come, but showing me tools which i now have the chance to teach others.

Delta

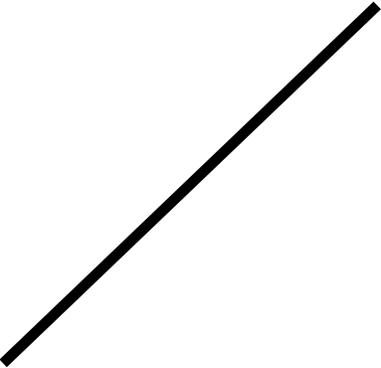


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What is POSSE ?

POSSE stands for Peer Outreach Support Services & Education, a program in North Halton, Ontario, which trains and supports youth to be outreach workers to other youth. Our work is done on the streets, in malls, and in other places where youth get together. We provide education, information, crisis intervention and, when asked, referral to other programs if the youth we talk to are looking for other help. We also provide supplies like condoms and safer drug use information kits to youth who decide that they want to have sex or use drugs.

POSSE youth, while they understand why the term "at-risk youth" is so often used, have decided this term needs to be changed to better reflect their experience and the experience of the young people with whom they work. The term POSSE now uses is "adventurous, at-risk and curious youth".

POSSE youth feel it is important that people understand what they mean by "safer" sex or "safer" drug use. POSSE makes no judgment about whether youth decide to have sex or take drugs. But everyone in POSSE believes that if someone decides to have sex or use drugs, they need to know the risks and they need to know how to reduce these risks. POSSE provides information and supplies to help make these choices safer for youth.

In many cases, the youth with whom POSSE works in the community might be considered "at risk". Some are homeless, either on the streets or "couch surfing". Others may be working or in school, but are involved in or on the edges of behaviours which carry "risk", such as substance use or sexual activity. In many cases, they face multiple challenges ranging from health through to housing and employment. We listen, talk, share what we know, are non judgmental - and, above all, we care.

Our program is based on a commitment to harm reduction, human rights and being youth-driven. We deal with some big issues in the lives of young

What is POSSE?

people in our community. Issues like safer drug use, sexual health and safer sex, violence, racism and homophobia, homelessness, legal rights and obligations, and mental health issues.

From the beginning of POSSE, youth have been involved as equals to adults in all aspects of the program. Youth are equal decision-makers in planning, training, and evaluation of POSSE. We make the word "empowerment" real.

As an example, as this manual was put together youth were involved in every step along the way, such as: hiring the consultant, approving the content and making sure it was youth-friendly, providing information, thoughts, graphics and poetry. You name it - youth were involved!

Does POSSE work? You bet!



When we last evaluated our outreach efforts, 94% of the youth we talked to on the streets in our evaluation said POSSE outreach was helpful to

them. A further 86% said POSSE was important to them. Here is what some of them had to say:



For experienced youth outreach workers, there are other opportunities for involvement in POSSE. This gives them a chance to further develop their own skills. POSSE benefits by having experienced outreach workers involved in decision-making, training other youth to be outreach workers, or in writing for the youth magazine developed by POSSE (The Undercroft - Where Minds Meet).

If you think a POSSE project could make a difference in the lives of youth where you live, this manual will tell you some of the things you need to know

What is POSSE?

in order to start a POSSE project in your own community.

a) POSSE Deal Breakers: Essential Values and Principles of POSSE

Peer Outreach Support Services & Education has been built on a set of values and principles which the youth and adults in POSSE believe are essential. In other words, they are deal breakers: without these values and principles, you cannot have a POSSE project. And if you don't make these principles and values come alive in your project, you cannot have a POSSE project.

i) Youth are the Experts on Their Own Lives

Seems pretty straightforward, doesn't it? But it isn't...

Most services which help and support youth are organized by adults. Many of these adults have real expertise in their fields, but by and large, this expertise has been developed without the meaningful involvement of youth. POSSE believes that working with "experts" is important because they have information, skills and knowledge which you cannot find elsewhere. Having them involved is important.

However, in traditional services, experts also almost always have more power and authority than youth have. They are automatically in a relationship of unequal power with youth. Experts and professionals (adults) are seen as having the answers and youth are asked to "comply".

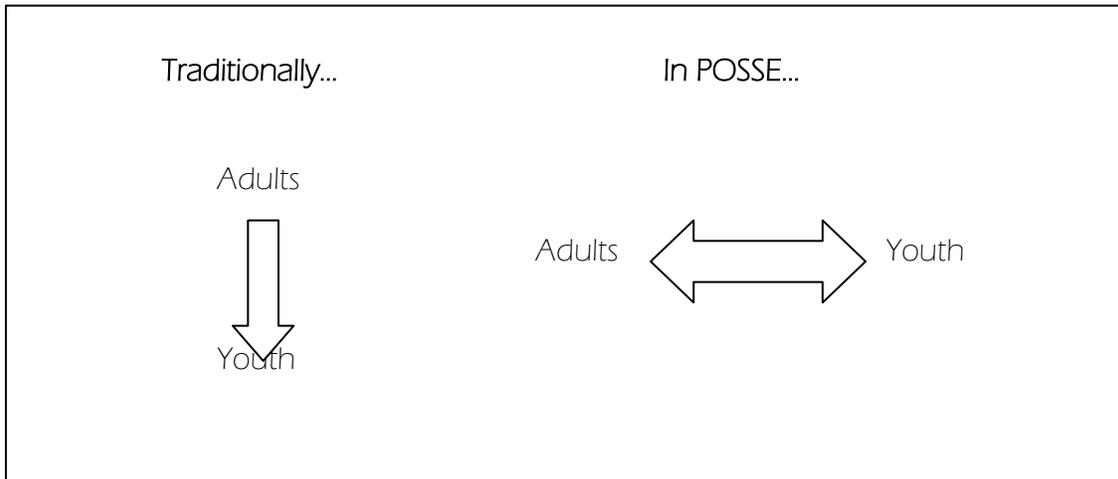
BUT, adults are not youth and they can never really fully understand what youth experience day-to-day. Only youth can experience this. And this makes them experts.

If youth are TRULY seen as experts and are treated as experts, then how adults work with them changes. Rather than adults asking (and sometimes telling) youth to "comply", the picture changes to one group of experts working with another group of experts.

POSSE was developed and organized based on seeing youth as experts who have as much to bring to the work as professionals and experts. Without this fundamental belief, POSSE would not be possible.

I was recently asked by a youth peer outreach worker "So, if you don't want to be called my boss, then what should I call you?" I replied "Co-worker."

Kimm



This has implications for how a lot gets done in POSSE. For example, most adults in the project are there as professionals/experts being paid for their work by the agencies and organizations they work for. So if this set of experts is getting paid, why should another group of experts - youth - not get paid? Put into action, this means that a number of the youth involved in POSSE get paid for attendance at meetings and so on (although they are paid above minimum wage, they are not paid nearly as much as the other group of experts!). This is discussed later in the manual, but it is important to keep in mind that when adults see and work with youth as "experts", a lot of their thinking may have to change!

ii) **Empowerment- It's Not Just for Show!**

POSSE has a commitment to youth empowerment - meaningful youth participation which has an impact.

There are lots of youth involvement and youth engagement projects around. Whether these projects truly "empower" youth or not depends on whether youth have the power to influence and be involved in decision-making in more than just a token way.

POSSE has approached this issue by ensuring that at every step in the program youth have a powerful voice, sitting at the decision-making table in numbers at least equal to the number of adults. Put another way, while adults usually have most of the power in organizations, in POSSE the power is shared. This means that youth drive the program.

There is a section starting on page 12 on empowerment and ways in which POSSE makes this principle come to life which can help you as you think about growing POSSE in your own community.

iii) **Harm Reduction**¹

POSSE understands "harm reduction" as an approach which seeks to reduce the possible harm which can come from activities such as sexual activity and drug use. For POSSE, this means that youth doing outreach (and adults supporting them) take a non-judgmental attitude towards youth with whom they work. If youth are engaged in risk activity, POSSE will provide the information and supplies they may require

There is a considerable discussion among professionals in the addictions field as to what is meant by harm reduction. This disagreement in the area of addictions focuses on the degree to which use of addictive substances should be restricted or not. See, for example, Reducing the Harm Associated with Injection Drug Use in Canada, prepared by the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Advisory Committee on Population Health, F/P/T Committee on Alcohol and Other Drug Issues, F/P/T Advisory Committee on AIDS, and F/P/T Heads of Corrections Working Group on HIV/AIDS for Ministers of Health Conference. September, 2001. page 8. The discussion in this manual is based on POSSE's understanding of harm reduction.



to engage in this activity more safely and, where asked, will provide information about other services that youth can contact for support or help. For other youth who are not yet engaged in such activity, POSSE provides information which will lead to better informed choices.

POSSE recognizes that harm reduction approaches, particularly when applied to youth under the legal age of consent, are usually controversial in a community. But the voice of POSSE youth outreach workers is very clear on this point:

"Youth will engage in these activities whether parents, school boards, the police or "the system" want them to or not. Our job is to try to make sure that when they do, they take every step possible to reduce the possible risks associated with them." – POSSE youth.

What is POSSE?



Softly speaking,
taking over,
giving orders,
taking action.
"Cut, blood, OD come on!"
taunting,
pushing,
& persuading.
"What more is there in this life?"

Image and poem from [The Undercroft](#)

POSSE and youth initiatives elsewhere know that a non-judgmental attitude is key to whether youth will trust, approach and use a service. Services which are not founded on a harm reduction strategy often make youth feel that they are being judged. **When** this happens, some youth will simply not get involved in the service. A harm reduction approach not only helps reduce the harm that youth may experience if they engage in risk activities, but is, on the basis of experience, more likely to be trusted by youth.

It is also important to remember that for youth who have been thinking about using drugs or engaging in sex that POSSE outreach with its emphasis on harm reduction is an effective early intervention strategy. Issues of risk and ways to reduce this risk are shared with youth before risk activities have occurred.

"Everyone has the right to know ways to reduce harm." – a POSSE youth.

iv) Promoting Human Rights – Anti-Oppression

POSSE is committed to ensuring that ALL youth have access to its services. This means youth from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, differently-abled youth of all sexual orientations and gender identities, users

What is POSSE?

and non-users, different sub-cultures, etc.

For this to happen requires attitudes and behaviours which are welcoming to all. POSSE youth outreach workers are vocal on this.

As a result, the promotion of human rights and issues such as racism, able-ism, homophobia and ageism form a critical part of the training process that youth outreach workers go through. There can be no "isms" of any sort - if "isms" happen, you have to name them, discuss them and deal with them.

v) **The Space has to be Safe**

POSSE wouldn't work if the space was not safe for all youth. What makes space safe?

POSSE youth tell us that for space to be safe it has to be welcoming for diverse youth (there can be no "isms"!) and youth need to know that there is a commitment to confidentiality (there are some limits on this which are discussed right below). Generally, the space also needs to be youth-friendly.

In many communities, groups which are doing Anti-Homophobia work or HIV/AIDS groups can provide you with suggestions for making space safe - talk to them.

vi) **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is important to POSSE for a number of reasons. The most important of these is that without confidentiality, many youth will not trust the youth outreach workers and staff of POSSE and consequently will not use POSSE's services. Put simply, youth say they need to be able to speak freely without fear that they will get into trouble. And if there need to be limits on confidentiality, as long as everyone understands what these limits are, trust can be developed and maintained. This way, there are "no surprises".



From The Undercroft

In the case of POSSE there are limits on confidentiality required by law. Specifically, where someone may be planning to act in a way which will harm themselves or others, staff have a legal duty to take action and report this to the appropriate organizations. In cases where youth are under 16 years old, if staff are aware of any type of abuse taking place, they also have to report this (If you are interested in starting a POSSE program, you will need to find out what the law is in your province about having to report on certain things - ask about the "duty to report".)

Peer Outreach Support Services & Education openly shares this limit on confidentiality with everyone in the project so that there are no surprises. As well, POSSE makes sure that when doing outreach, youth know they only have to give their first name, street name or nickname. Finally, youth know that they can always ask POSSE outreach workers and staff for information for a "friend" without having to name the friend.

vii) Keeping it Youth-Friendly

Like youth being experts on their own lives, this seems straightforward, but it isn't. The way we have traditionally organized services is NOT youth-friendly, and a commitment to becoming - and staying - youth-friendly can be a challenge.

When asked what POSSE has done to become and stay youth-friendly, youth outreach workers listed the following things:

- meeting times are usually in the evening because of school and jobs (many professionals do NOT like to meet at night because they work during the day)
- service times need to reflect the times when youth are gathering in the community, again, usually after school and in the evening
- the place where you meet and train needs to be youth friendly and easy to get to
- people need to think about dressing respectfully and there must be a non-judgmental attitude about how people dress
- ground rules need to be developed by youth and adults together and there need to be consequences if ground rules are broken
- the space needs to be welcoming and safe
- decisions should be made on the basis of consensus
- youth must be treated by adults as equals
- breaks need to be built into meetings
- participation needs to be affordable for youth, i.e., paying youth for their time
- space needs to be adult-friendly too, but youth-friendly is the priority
- provide food

What is POSSE?

- share chairing responsibilities
- ensure youth voices are heard if, despite training, adults talk over youth - call them on it
- call adults and youth both for disrespectful behaviour

viii) Non-judgmental

POSSE youth outreach workers are very clear that everyone, youth and adults alike, involved in the POSSE project need to be non-judgmental about others. This means that there has to be genuine respect for everyone else.

Peers make the best facilitators for abuse prevention. Young people generally recognize no authority on illicit drugs. Neither police, nor teachers, nor doctors get any comprehensive training on the subject. Researchers can't agree on the fine (and not so fine) details of drug effects and health. Money, politics and ideology color any source that might otherwise qualify as "expert." Although less educated than teachers, doctors and police, young people have another form of expertise: contemporary culture. Only someone close to contemporary youth culture can fluently "speak the same language," and understand the nuances of context and slang—essential for participants to feel comfortable expressing themselves.

Theo Rosenfeld: found at www.harmreduction.org/news/spring01

However, youth also indicate that it is important to be able to call "inappropriate" behaviour such as racism, ageism and sexism. When and where "isms" appear, it is important to respectfully name this behaviour and deal with it on the spot.

ix) Not Faith-Based

To keep space "safe" for all youth, POSSE cannot be an initiative which in any way promotes a particular religion or faith. In the experience of POSSE youth, faith-based initiatives are too often judgmental about behaviour, dress and language. Instead, POSSE believes that it is critical for people of all faiths to feel welcome and comfortable in POSSE.

x) Youth Delivery of Service is Critical

POSSE has a strong commitment to peer outreach, a commitment which links youth to youth.

POSSE trains youth (more on this in later sections) and supports them as they move through the community, on the streets, in malls and in other places where youth meet. As they meet other youth, they provide information and education on risk behaviours, information on services available in the community, and, where needed or requested, supplies and informal counseling. This emphasis on youth providing service to youth is

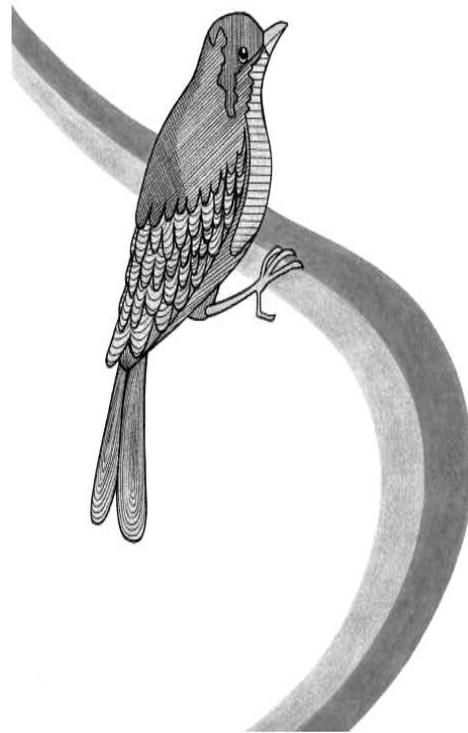
consistent with what research and professionals tells us works.

In a report on peer-based initiatives for out-of-the-mainstream youth from Health Canada², the difficulty "traditional" services have in reaching this group of young people is described very well. In another report on reducing the harm associated with injection drug use, there is a clear call for peer-outreach programs in order to reach at-risk youth. Among the observations and recommendations for outreach in this second report were the following³:

"Peers are most effective in reaching people with drug problems, and are often seen as the most credible and trustworthy people to provide them with information to reduce the risk associated with drug use and link them with health, social, and addiction services...

"Develop innovative outreach approaches and use peer outreach workers to disseminate information to hard-to-reach populations and to encourage people who use drugs, particularly youth and young adults, to seek appropriate treatment services."

The use of peer outreach workers is seen as a best practice. It is a highly effective "front line" way to assist and support youth who might not otherwise seek information, service or, in some cases, supplies. Once this connection is made, POSSE - and other peer outreach programs - can assist them to connect with the much wider range of more mainstream services which can support youth. From The Undercroft



² Peer Helper Initiatives for out-of-the-Mainstream Youth: A Report and Compendium. Health Canada: 1996. Pages 6-9.

³ Reducing the Harm Associated with Injection Drug Use in Canada, prepared by the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Advisory Committee on Population Health, F/P/T Committee on Alcohol and Other Drug Issues. F/P/T Advisory Committee on AIDS, and F/P/T Heads of Corrections Working Group on HIV/AIDS for Ministers of Health Conference. September, 2001. Pages 10 and 37.

What is POSSE?

POSSE People Say POSSE is:

*a fun way to get involved
in your community*

*bringing forth new possibilities
and perspectives*

FUNTAQUAR

REAL



AWESOME

*non-judgmental, diversity and equality,
youth empowerment, understanding*

*a great place to learn all about youth -
non-judgmental environment - LOVE it*

*a safe place for everyone
to be heard*

*a unique opportunity for me - a service provider -
to hear the voice of the youth*

a community of leaders

*an opportunity for self-exploration,
evaluation and expansion*

**a group of people directed towards
learning and educating their peers
in hopes of initiating social
understanding and empathetic action**

*a diverse group of people aimed
towards expanding youth initiative*

fa-la-la-la-la-la-la-la

fa-la-la-la-la-la-la
GREAT

What is POSSE?



From the Front Lines...

In 2003 I was involved in a program called the North Halton Hepatitis C Prevention Project where I met and came to know, trust, and respect Kimm Kent the project coordinator. She ignited a spark in me and my fellow youth that for the past four years has refused to burn out. She inspired us as youth to desire to contribute to our community and help youth who like us needed to be helped. From this project we wanted to create a program in our community that could reach out to at risk youth like us. We wanted to do what Kimm did and she made it possible along with highly motivated individuals (DOMENIC☺) who understood the need for a POSSE in our community. The Peer Outreach Support Services and Education program was and still is a life line for a lot of youth. Without the knowledge and support I received from the program I would have had a very different life and would not have been able to accomplish the things I have today. The program allowed me to speak my mind and be heard. I learned so much about racism, sexism and homophobia and how my actions and words could affect others. I helped other youth who like me had issue's that most organizations didn't understand. I was provided with the knowledge of harm reduction which is probably the reason why I'm not fighting diseases like Hep.C or Aids or better yet dead.

POSSE let me walk into a space where I felt safe, it empowered me as a youth to want to do things with my life and become an advocate for other youth who had yet to find their voice in our small and judgmental

community. My greatest accomplishment was knowing that within the growing population of Halton I was contributing as a valuable member, I was truly making a difference for my generation and those to come. Through POSSE I was able to fulfill my role as an active member of my community as a youth. I can truly say I was so proud of myself, which from my perspective is an even greater accomplishment.

Now as a young adult I find myself drawn to this organization and the passion it inspires in the youth, the community workers and parents etc. I have come full circle from being a "at risk youth" working to help my peers, to a young mother, and a student doing office administration for a program that I hope is still around when I'm pulling my hair out because of my child's behavior. I watched this program start out as a controversial approach to dealing with youth issue's, I have watched as it tore down the barriers and notions of harm reduction, and changed the opinions of politicians who once would have condemned this program and now support it. I have watched as it built strong relations between youth, police, and the community. I have watched the coordinators fight to keep it going so that the youth who need its resources and information aren't left in the dark. This program changes people, not just the youth but every person it connects with.

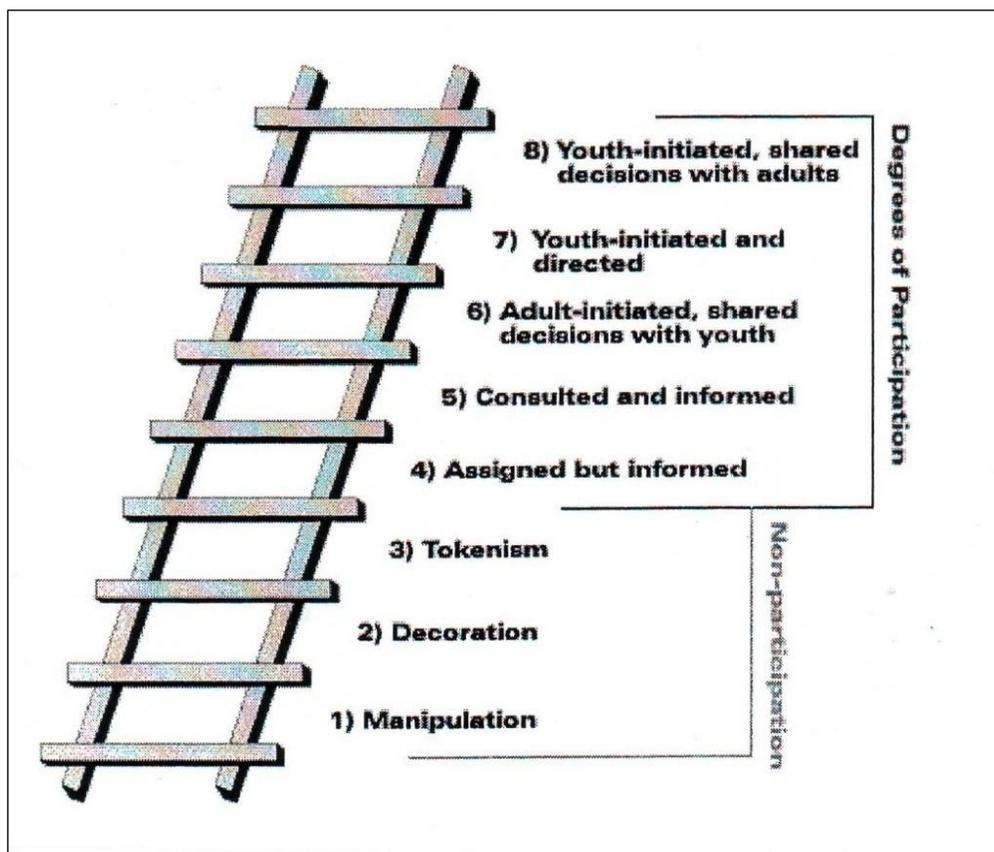
Carley

Youth Empowerment: Walking the Talk

The commitment to youth empowerment which Peer Outreach Support Services & Education has runs deep. This means that youth and adults share decision-making in all aspects of the program.

a) Making Participation Meaningful

To understand why POSSE involves youth in the program in the way it does, it is helpful to understand that there are a lot of ways that youth can be involved in the activities of an organization. People who look at organizations and how they work have discovered that there are a lot of ways that this can be done.



Roger Hart developed a "ladder of children's participation" for UNICEF. At the bottom, it includes Manipulation and at the top Shared Decision-making. As you go up the ladder, the process is increasingly meaningful, meaning that youth have a real impact on the decisions that are being made. In other words, the farther up you go on the ladder, the more power youth

have. POSSE works hard to make sure youth are involved at the highest two rungs of this ladder with a stress on the top rung. For this reason, for example, there are equal numbers of youth and adults on the collaborative decision-making body which POSSE has.

"Children's Participation: from Tokenism to Citizenship", Roger Hart. Innocenti Research Centre, UNICEF: 1992.

If you look at this ladder, you will see lots of examples of youth participation as it is practiced in organizations. Many of these ways, however, do not mean that youth are true partners in decision-making. For example, a Youth Advisory Committee can provide advice and recommendations on an issue without necessarily being involved in

decision-making.⁴

So, why is meaningful involvement of youth important?

“It has given me something to show up and be responsible for” – a POSSE youth

“We have become a team. We have all learned not to let one another down” – a POSSE youth

Some of the recurring themes and challenges for young people in decision-making roles include:

- Young people are involved in token and “decorative” ways,
- Young people are involved marginally but adults make all the decisions,
- Young people are involved in making “decision-less” decisions where the decisions are limited to issues that do not really matter,
- Young people make decisions but nothing really happens,
- Young people are included in decision-making, but the project is under-resourced, making action difficult, and;
- Youth is transitory: experienced young people become too old to fulfil their youth role.

Sharing a New Story: Young People in Decision-Making. Australian Youth Research Centre, for the Foundation for Young Australians. June, 2003.

b) There are Huge Benefits to Involving Youth as Decision-Makers

i) Benefits for youth?

There is a long, long list of the benefits for youth when they are involved in meaningful ways in programs. The McCreary Centre in British Columbia suggests that participation of youth:

- Promotes resiliency (based on youth potential and not youth problems)
- Reduces risks
- Is central to positive youth development
- Increases youth health⁵

⁴ Many people argue that the degree to which youth are involved in decision-making needs to depend on the nature of the organization or project. This may, in fact, be true, but in the case of POSSE, there is no disagreement that shared-decision-making is critical to the program's success.

⁵ Why Does Youth Participation Matter. The McCreary Centre. Can be found at www.mcs.bc.ca/ya_why.htm

In the experience of POSSE youth outreach workers, participation also:

- Develops skills
- Makes you feel good about yourself
- Lets you make a difference in the community

Canada is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which outlines the rights for children / youth to be able to “express [their] views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child” (Article 12) “and the “right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds” (Article 13). It is consistent with this international commitment that, wherever possible, youth be given a meaningful say in the programs and services they will use. POSSE interprets this commitment to mean participation as partners with adults in its activities.

But the benefits to the way POSSE involves youth are not only for youth.

ii) **Benefits for the Program?**

POSSE benefits from this partnership between adults and youth in many ways because it ensures the program is relevant to youth needs. This

has increased program effectiveness and has created a network of trained youth who, even after their involvement in POSSE, are able to take the messages of POSSE forward in other aspects of their lives.

iii) **Benefits for the Community?**

“If I see something and I know it is wrong I now attempt to correct it or make it better” – a POSSE youth

“I am a lot more involved in community events because I want to try to make change, because change needs to happen, not with me, but with the community” – a POSSE youth

The community benefits from youth participation as partners in the POSSE program in a variety of ways as well. Because of the program’s effectiveness, risk behaviours among youth are reduced and youth needing additional support can find the information they need.



POSSE youth, because of the skills they develop, help challenge many of the stereotypes about youth.

Because POSSE is trusted by youth, POSSE can mobilize youth to participate with other organizations. For example, POSSE has been instrumental in bringing youth and police together to deal with critical issues which have concerned the community at large, such as violence.

iv) Benefits for Other Organizations?

Other organizations also benefit through the way youth participate in POSSE. There have been a wide variety of requests from other organizations for POSSE youth to provide input and/or to participate in program development and planning processes because POSSE youth have the skills and experience to communicate youth needs effectively.

c) What are the Challenges to Involving Youth as Partners?

There are a lot of challenges when involving youth in a meaningful way in an organization or an activity.

Encouraging participation of youth can be a challenge. POSSE has found that you have to use a lot of different ways to get youth involved and has used word of mouth, flyers handed out at and personal visits to services where you can find youth (such as Sexual Health Clinics, Probation and Parole offices and malls, but you may need to seek permission to be there first). Youth

already involved in the program are also great promoters!

Keeping the youth who are participating is also a challenge. You have to keep the work interesting and fun and constantly be seeking feedback on what is working and what is not working. Sometimes, it is necessary to follow up with individual youth to find out what is getting in the way of their continued involvement. There may be personal issues someone is dealing with, or they may have important information for you about what is not working for them.

Things that hinder youth participation include:

- Young people not being reimbursed their expenses
- Insufficient resources
- A lack of staff time to promote the need for youth participation within the organization
- Little or no orientation for young people new to the organization
- A lack of training for the type of input being requested of the young person
- Constant cynicism and put-downs
- Ideas put forward by young people, being used by adults who then take the credit
- No real power sharing
- Lack of respect for the young person's view
- An environment where the young person is expected to be perfect

"Youth Participation: Grow it or Kill It - The Formula for Both", Robyn Moore. Can be found at <http://library.christchurch.org.nz/Bibliofile/2000/LIANZA2000papers/RobynMoore.pdf>

Attendance can be critical but there is also a need for flexibility. Attendance expectations were established by youth and adults together when POSSE was first created and every young person involved in POSSE is made aware of what these expectations are. Particularly during the extended training that youth outreach workers receive, regular attendance is important. POSSE staff or youth outreach workers regularly check up when someone has not attended a meeting.

Continuity is another issue. Most youth outreach workers are with POSSE for 2 years. As they get older or they reach the end of their commitment to POSSE, they move on to other roles, e.g., start training new youth outreach workers or become members of the governing Collaborative. In its second year of operation, POSSE developed a second project - a youth written, edited and produced magazine (The Undercroft - Where Minds Meet) - which many youth outreach workers have moved on to once their time doing outreach has come to an end.

While POSSE has not had to deal with this, **many organizations are resistant to meaningful youth empowerment and participation.** There are deep disagreements in some about whether youth should have "real" power and there are, as well, huge barriers to making organizations youth-friendly. There need to be strong advocates for meaningful youth involvement within organizations if

they are truly to become committed to seeing youth as partners who share in decisions. The organizational change required to become truly "youth-friendly" can be tough work for many organizations.

Earlier, we outlined the things which youth outreach workers say are important to making POSSE youth friendly (see the suggestions on page 8).

Other groups have also looked at this issue of youth-friendliness. In its Best Practice Guidelines, the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario has developed a check list for organizations to use to decide how youth-friendly they are. This is printed on page 18.

There are a few other things you can keep in mind to make the organization youth-friendly.

Ask youth which decisions or types of decisions they want to be involved in and, once a decision is made or a policy decided, you don't have to keep going back to it unless someone questions it.

Without a deep commitment to the philosophy of meaningful youth participation and to making the changes which will support this participation, POSSE activities will be impossible to repeat in other communities.

image from The Undercroft

An Organizational Checklist for Youth-Friendly Services

Involving youth

As an organization, do we:

- Clearly identify who we are serving and tailor services to meet their needs?
- Consider the needs of diverse populations (i.e. immigrant youth)?
- Involve youth during the planning, implementation and evaluation of our services in a meaningful way?
- Give youth opportunities for leadership?
- Include strategies that are youth-directed and youth-influenced?
- Provide opportunities for role models in the lives of adolescents (e.g. parents, teachers, sports coaches, youth club directors)?
- Provide information about community resources available to meet the needs of youth?
- Involve other community leaders (e.g. religious or cultural)?
- Focus on building strengths and assets? Promote competence and skill development?
- Enlist peer counselors and educators in working with youth?
- Focus on holistic approaches rather than single issue approaches?
- Include strategies that are multi-faceted and multi-disciplinary (individual, community)?
- Effectively employ a variety of activities to engage youth over time?

Environment

As an organization, do we:

- Make our services accessible, timely, convenient and flexible?
- Ensure that our services are inexpensive, if not free?
- Really work at making our environment "youth-friendly" (i.e. posters, music, magazines)?
- Ensure that staff/youth ratios and group sizes permit staff to meet the needs of individual youth?
- Establish environments that youth perceive to be safe for their participation?
- Ensure privacy and confidentiality?
- Break down barriers to empowerment?

Facilitation

As an organization, do we:

- Train our staff to listen openly and honestly to concerns?
- Foster the role of facilitator rather than expert?
- Allow youth to set goals for themselves with assistance from staff?
- Train our staff to feel comfortable discussing adolescent concerns?
- Use role playing to help adolescents practice negotiating skills?
- Stress cooperation rather than competition?
- Focus on building strengths and assets? Promote competence and skill development?
- Enlist peer counselors and educators in working with youth?
- Focus on holistic approaches rather than single issue approaches?
- Include strategies that are multi-faceted and multi-disciplinary (individual, community)?
- Effectively employ a variety of activities to engage youth over time?

Enhancing Healthy Adolescent Development: Nursing Best Practice Guideline. Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, July, 2002. Appendix E.

Setting Up a POSSE Project

a) How Did POSSE Get Started?

The Peer Outreach Support Services & Education program in North Halton has its own history. It is unique as will be any other program modeled on the experience of POSSE. This will be true wherever a POSSE project is started because communities are different and so are the youth who will be involved.

POSSE grew out of a program run by Halton Hills Community Support and Information in collaboration with the Health Department of the Region of Halton, the Hepatitis-C project. This was a harm reduction project which involved youth working with a youth outreach worker in North Halton. Over the course of this project, youth and staff who were involved got to know a lot about the needs of and issues facing young people in the area. They realized that an important source of information and outreach which had made a difference for a lot of young people was going to be lost to the community when the Hepatitis-C project came to an end. After talking about this for some time, the staff, in discussion with young people, developed a proposal for longer term funding for a much broader range of information and outreach services to be provided by youth to youth with the support of professional staff. Key to this



From The Undercroft

proposal was finding a host agency and developing a broad collaborative of youth and agencies which would become the major group for decision-making. This Collaborative, with the AIDS Committee of Guelph and Wellington County as the host agency, looked for and received funding first from the Halton Healthy Community Fund and National Crime Prevention and, over the last three years, operating funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. And so the POSSE Project was born.

b) Starting a POSSE Project

i) Who Could Start a POSSE Project?

Anyone - youth or adult - who sees the needs of youth being unmet in their community could start a POSSE project. However, it would have to be someone who has a commitment to the values and principles of POSSE (which were discussed in Section 1 starting on page 3) and who believes these needs can be best met in their community through peer outreach activities.

ii) Is there a need for POSSE?

In the experience of peer outreach workers, other youth, staff and the Collaborative of POSSE, there are some signs you can look for in your community that peer outreach, a harm reduction approach and youth empowerment can make a difference.

There are youth who will not use more "traditional" agencies or who will not trust more traditional strategies. You may find that, despite there being a number of youth programs in your community, there is evidence that some important issues are not going away and may have become even worse over time. For example, you can look at:

- Rates of transmission of Sexually Transmitted Diseases among youth

- Rates of drug use among youth
- The % or number of youth who are NOT involved in "traditional" services
- Rates of youth homelessness in the community

These rates, %s and numbers may be troubling, or may have increased in the last few years. Any of them can suggest that "traditional" approaches are not working for some youth. You can get much of this information from Health or Public Health Departments in municipalities, or by talking to organizations that publish this kind of information (in Ontario, for example, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health is a good source; Canada-wide, try Statistics Canada; provincially, talk to your Ministry of Health to see what kind of statistics they have. You can also try University and College Departments, and, where they exist, Social Planning Councils.)

Doing this work is important, because when you talk to a funder, they will want to know about the evidence you have that a new service is needed.

The other important "indicators" you can look at are what youth in the community are saying. Are they telling you that they have friends who need information, that there are important problems that aren't going away, that some of their friends have big issues to deal with and that they won't go to existing services?

There are different ways to find out what youth think. While the stories young people tell you are important, the more "formal" the information they give you, the better. You can, for example, hold some focus groups (a brief description of a focus group is included in Appendix 2) or do a small, friendly survey. Surveys could be conducted face-to-face with youth in malls, employment centres or at other places where youth gather. Maybe your local schools could help you out (although you will probably need permission). In terms of getting the questions right and helping you analyze what the answers you get, colleges or universities might be able to help you here as could Social Planning Councils (where they exist). In some cases, surveys of youth might have already been done and you should probably look at these as sources of information as well.

Always keep your ears and eyes open. The best case for a new service is a combination of convincing statistics and powerful personal stories.

iii) Building Support

Once you have decided that there is evidence of need for a POSSE project in your community, you need to build support. In your conversations with people about the needs of youth, you may already have already found "allies". They could be youth, adults/parents, agencies and professionals. Talking about what you

are trying to do from the very beginning and identifying people who support the idea is important, because allies will be critical to your efforts. It will also allow you to share the work.

There are some possible "natural" allies, e.g., youth, Public Health, sexual health clinics, HIV/AIDS organizations, needle exchange programs, shelters, and other youth services. You are looking for allies who are comfortable with youth empowerment, harm reduction and anti-oppression approaches and, ideally, you would be looking for allies among organizations and people who are "youth-friendly" or trying to become youth-friendly.

You will want to be talking to possible allies not only about the idea of a POSSE project, but about how they might see their role in supporting the project. Some may give you only moral support. Others may be able to provide support such as meeting space, information or free supplies. You can ask for letters of support for funding proposals or assistance in getting word out into the community, first about what you are doing and later about the program itself.

Developing a committed group of people and organizations who support the idea of POSSE is really important. If there are community concerns about this project or this approach, you can call on these "allies" to help you respond to these concerns. Community support is also really important to possible funders, so

identifying and building this support from day one is critical.

iv) Strategies for Finding Allies

In the case of POSSE, because it grew out of an existing program, a lot of working relationships had already been established. If you are working within an existing service, you will already have a good sense of where you might find allies.

However, if you are new to this, here are some ideas:

- Start out with existing allies (see above). Our experience in North Halton suggests that those services sponsored by a faith community will likely have trouble with some of the values and principles of POSSE, but other service providers may be open to these fundamental parts of POSSE. Phone these service providers and speak to their Executive Directors about their interest in working with you. Ask them to give you the names of other people and organizations with whom you should be talking.
- Talk to youth in places where youth congregate - the streets, malls, services, and youth hostels. You may need staff permission to do this in some cases. Schools are another possibility but you will need permission.
- Put posters up and leaflets out with contact information in places where young people gather.

- Hold a meeting and invite youth and service providers to come and share their ideas and stories. Invite people by phone, letter or a small ad in your local paper.
- At some point talk to local politicians who you think might be excited about to the idea of a POSSE project. You may need their support down the road.
- Talk to the police in your area **after** you have developed a plan for what the service is going to look like. Developing a positive working relationship with the police is important. See page 37 for information on how POSSE has dealt with this relationship.

v) The Formal Collaborative

When POSSE was created, the decision at that time was NOT to turn POSSE into an independent organization. It began as a project and the built-in strength of involving a group of agencies, programs and individuals with credibility in the community was seen as important. You could decide to create an independent organization with a Board of Directors drawn from the allies you have developed, but for the purposes of the Manual, we will talk about creating a Collaborative instead (which reflects where POSSE is at right now).

When the time is right (and this will depend on your local circumstances), you will want to talk to some allies you have identified about becoming members

of the "Collaborative". The Collaborative is the group which will make decisions about the project once it is up and running, and is made up of people from agencies and organizations and youth. This is a key step in creating a POSSE program.

Even more so than other allies you have identified, the group of people who you ask to join the Collaborative have to be very comfortable with POSSE's values and principles (such as empowerment, harm reduction and anti-oppression) and should understand what it means to be youth-friendly and youth-driven.

Building this formal Collaborative is important because most federal, provincial, local, private and charitable funders are looking these days to fund activities that include partnerships or collaboration.

In North Halton, the POSSE Collaborative includes representatives from the following agencies and organizations:

- ADAPT (Halton Alcohol, Drug & Gambling, Assessment, Prevention & Treatment)
- ROCK (Reach out Centre for Kids)
- Links to Care - Off the Wall / Open Door Youth Centre
- The AIDS Committee of Guelph and Wellington County
- The AIDS Network (Hamilton)
- HOPE (Halton Organization for Pride in Education)
- Halton Regional Police Services

- North Halton Cultural Awareness Council
- Between 6 - 12 youth with no formal affiliation other than POSSE

In addition, the Halton Region Health Department Sexual Health Clinic and Needle Exchange Program has a representative who sits as a non-voting member of the Collaborative as do the two staff of POSSE.

In building a POSSE Collaborative, the roles and responsibilities of each of the members has to be clearly understood. For this reason, POSSE created a Collaborative Agreement which is signed by each member and which outlines:

- Membership
- Purpose
- Mandate
- Membership principles and guidelines
- Participation guidelines
- Decision-making process
- Financial Management
- Roles and Responsibilities, a section which outlines 10 key tasks of the Collaborative

A copy of the full POSSE Collaborative Agreement can be found in Appendix 1.

POSSE staff and youth indicated as this manual was being developed that there are some other qualities in an effective Collaborative member. These included:

- Collaborative members need to be willing to take risks; programming for curious, at-risk and adventurous youth can sometimes be unpopular in a community or lead to situations with the potential for conflict. Good risks are worth taking, and Collaborative members should be willing to take these good risks with programming and other POSSE activities.
- Members need to be committed and willing to participate actively on the decision-making.
- Collaborative members need to be willing to be trained on a variety of issues, including adults being trained on how to work with youth and youth being trained on how to work with adults.

The POSSE Collaborative meets every second month in the evening for about 2 hours. It receives updates on POSSE activities, reviews and approves research and reports, considers new issues, and evaluates and approves proposed new activities. It reviews, approves and monitors the budget, assessing non-budgeted expenses and approving them as appropriate. In other words, it makes decisions about all the key activities of POSSE.

For example, as this Manual was being developed, the content, the structure, every section and Appendix, the format and even the printing and distribution plans were evaluated, modified and approved by the

Collaborative. Youth members had pre-meetings prior to the Collaborative meetings to give them a chance to meet with the writer separately to raise any issues and concerns they might have about the Manual as it was being developed. The Manual, as a result, truly reflects what the Collaborative believed is important to share with others about the POSSE experience.

vi) **The “Host” or Flow-Through Agency**

If you are going to be seeking funding for POSSE, you will need to identify an agency which will hold and administer the money you might receive. Normally, this organization needs to sit as a member of the Collaborative and needs to be a registered charity in order to meet funder expectations. This is the “host” or flow-through agency.

This agency has a critically important role and its responsibilities are outlined in POSSE's Collaborative Agreement. Specifically, the responsibilities which are outlined include:

- Acting as a lead or host agency for any funding application
- Signing contractual agreements with funders on behalf of POSSE
- Accepts, holds and processes funds in accordance with funder requirements and POSSE budget and decision-making

- Being accountable to the funder for all financial requirements including reporting and audited statements (where required)

This can be a demanding set of responsibilities, and POSSE budgets contain a budget line which allows the host agency to be paid for this financial work (usually in a budget line called Administration which in the case of POSSE is set at 10% of the overall operating budget of a grant). In the case of POSSE in North Halton, the host agency is the AIDS Committee of Guelph and Wellington County. Thanks, folks!!

vii) Additional Financial Policies

Because finances are so critical, and the relationship between POSSE and its host agency so important, POSSE has identified additional financial policies which include:

- POSSE staff, with approval of the lead agency, have the authority to spend money on behalf of the Collaborative.
- Invoices are submitted by POSSE staff and paid by the host agency. POSSE staff must be aware of all invoices submitted for POSSE initiatives.
- All fundraised dollars will be used according to the discretion of POSSE staff to a maximum of \$1000.00 and approved by the Executive Director of the host agency or otherwise approved by the POSSE collaborative.

- Any expenditure exceeding \$1,000.00 not previously budgeted will require approval from the POSSE Collaborative.
- All expenses and revenues will be recorded by the host agency financial management systems, reported monthly to POSSE staff and shared at Collaborative meetings.
- All assets remain with the POSSE Collaborative as long as it continues developing and delivering projects. In the event POSSE ceases to exist, the assets will become the property of the host agency, unless otherwise arranged with the donating agency and POSSE Collaborative.

A copy of the Letter of Understanding between POSSE and its host agency, the AIDS Committee of Guelph and Wellington County, can be found in Appendix 1.

c) Involving Youth from the Get-Go

Finding, involving and keeping young people involved in POSSE is critical from Day One. And it is not just youth in general - it is youth willing and committed to helping other youth around critical issues such as harm reduction and anti-oppression. So, how can you find these youth?

If you are a youth reading this manual and this is where your interest and commitment lies, then look to your

own circle of friends first - and start talking it up. Word-of-mouth is a great way to get people involved. You can also go to malls and other places young people gather and talk to them. Put up posters and hold a meeting or two for youth only.

Once you have contacted some agencies and organizations, ask them to post notices and tell young people who might be involved in programs about what you are doing. If you are still in school, see if you can put up some posters there or have a meeting at lunch or after school on school premises.

Don't take too long to involve adults - and be prepared to insist on training for both youth and adults in how to work together. It isn't always easy.

If you are an adult (parent or professional) reading this manual, your natural tendency is likely to speak to other professionals first. While those conversations are important to have, you need to reach out to youth almost immediately if you are going to truly honour the principles and values of POSSE. Youth have to be involved from Day One.

Do you know some youth who might be interested? If so, talk to them and have them talk to their friends. As much as you can, have youth talk to other youth. Where you are concerned about safety, go with a young person onto the streets at night, for example, but let them do the talking unless you have an

unusual ability to establish trust and rapport with street level youth (or even youth in general for that matter)

You can ask fellow adults and/or professionals to talk to young people they know, including youth who are participating in existing services. You can also put up posters and distribute flyers with a contact number included. With permission, you may be able to have your local schools help get the word out.

d) Want to Keep Youth Involved?

Finding youth who express an interest in being involved and keeping youth involved are two separate issues. Unless you, the meetings you call, and the way you relate to young people is youth friendly, you will lose them,

In the section called POSSE Deal Breakers: Essential Values and Principles of POSSE (starting on page 3), we outlined a checklist for youth friendliness for organizations. Check it out.

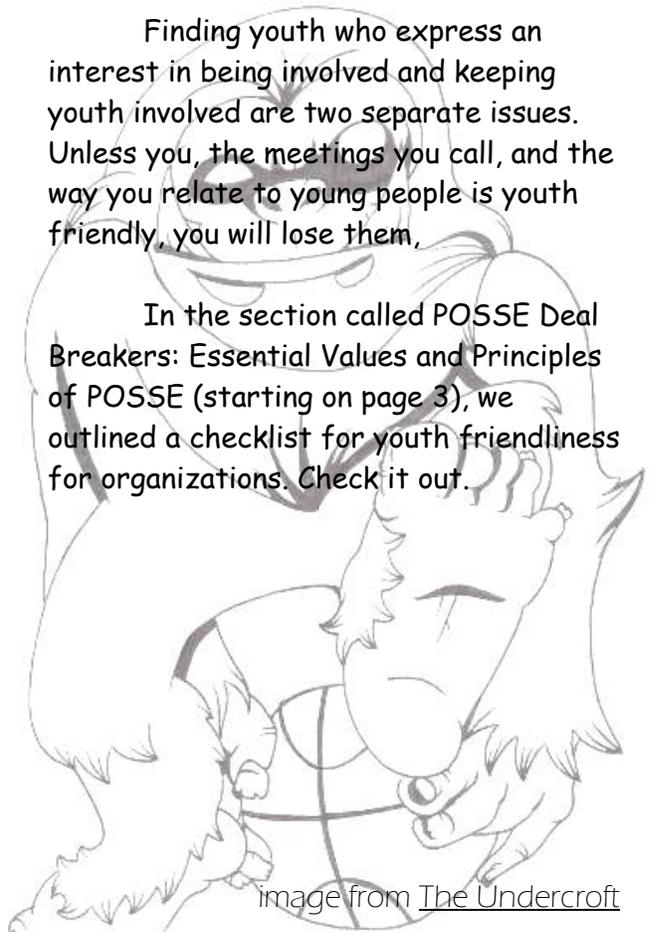


image from [The Undercroft](#)

e) What Are the Needs of Youth in Your Community?

“You wanna know what youth need just ask us” – a posse youth

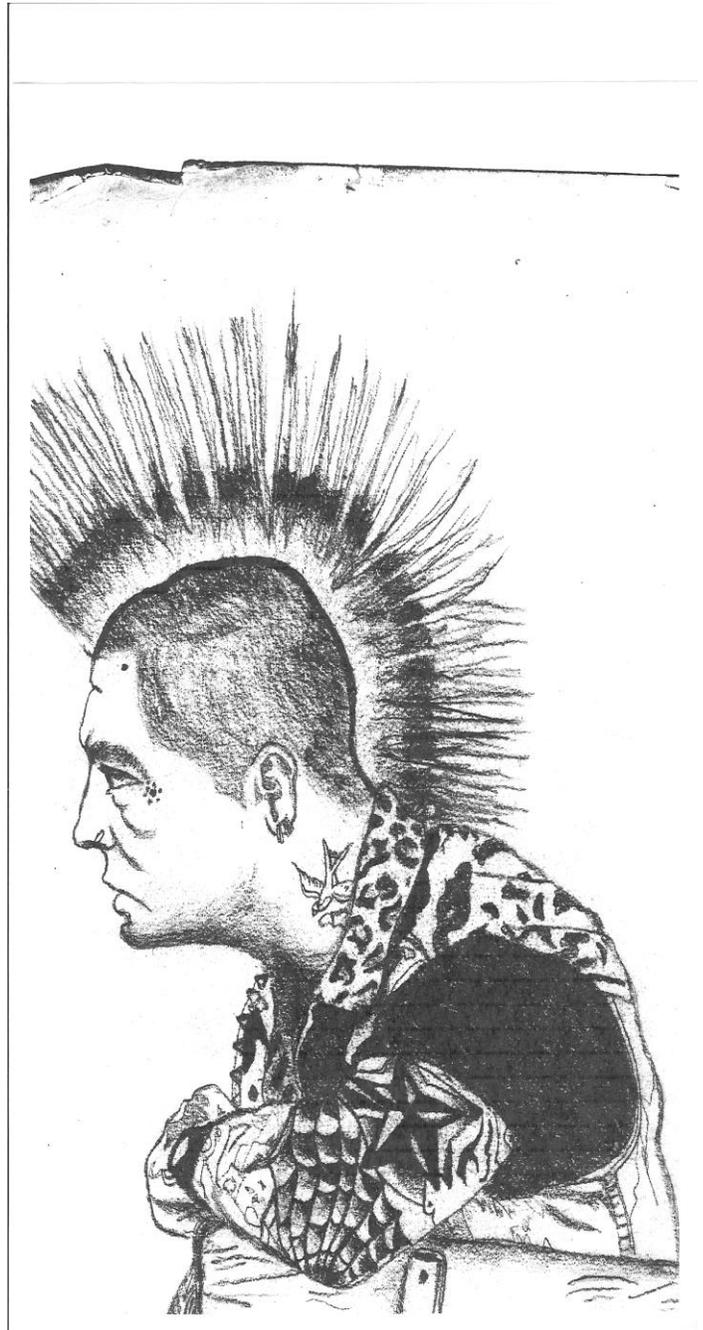
Although you began this process by assessing the need for a POSSE project by looking at general trends in your community, before you begin the process of actually designing the services needed, you have to have a really good understanding of the needs of youth in your community. You may have already got some of this information when you first started talking to people about the possibility of a POSSE project, but in case you didn't, read on...

The best place to start this process is by talking to both youth themselves and to professionals who work with young people. Here are some ideas that we have found work.

i) Understand that there are Youth Sub-cultures

Before talking to young people, it is important to understand that all youth are not the same. There are a lot of subcultures among youth, each with its own style of dress, language, perspectives and opinions. You need to become familiar with these subcultures, or at least the subcultures in your community.

POSSE youth define a youth sub-culture as any group of youth who may



share opinions and a view of the world but who do not identify with mainstream culture, whether they are visibly different from mainstream youth or not.

From [The Undercroft](#)

Of course, a good way to find out about the subcultures in your own community is to talk to young people. You can also do web-based research to understand the politics and history of some sub-cultures.

How best to approach each of these subcultures is something you need to talk to youth about. If you are a young person, you may already know how - if you are an adult, you may need some help!

ii) Make Sure You Have Enough Detail About Youth Needs

In order to design the services needed, you may have to have more detailed information on youth needs than you gathered earlier. Maybe not...but if you do, use the same methods as before (see page 20).

iii) Developing a Good Understanding of Existing Services for Youth

It is also important to become really well-informed about the services for youth which already exist in your community. Some needs of youth are already being responded to by these services, but they may not be reaching all youth or they may not be reaching youth as effectively as they might (youth feedback on these services can be really helpful in this regard).

A good place to start is with any existing directories of services in your community. You can find these on the net or they are often published by Community Information Centres and may be available on-line or in your local library. Review what currently exists and, where necessary, follow up with phone calls to service providers to discuss their services with you and how or whether they are dealing with the youth needs which you have identified.

In many cases, youth services are being offered by agencies that are focused on youth alone. In others, youth are being served by agencies who serve other people as well. You need to check this out. If there are more "generic" agencies, such as a Family Services Association, the Salvation Army,

When you are talking to other agencies about the services they provide, keep in mind that they may be able to provide support to you once POSSE is up and running. They may have people who can provide training for outreach workers, information about their services which you can distribute, meeting space, and other types of support. Don't be afraid to ask at the right time - if you never ask, you won't receive!

or affordable housing groups or a mainstream employment agency you may need to talk to them as well. Be aware that not all organizations will agree with

the approach which you want to take to providing service, particularly in the areas of harm reduction and peer outreach.

At the end of this process, you should have a list of services available for youth in your community.

iv) What Youth Needs are not Being Met?

Once you have identified needs and services, you can do what is formally called a "gaps analysis". Put more simply, you need to ask whether there are needs that are not being met. And can POSSE respond to these needs?

There is an important difference here about which you need to be careful. It is the difference between a service existing which youth do not have enough information about and a service to which, for a variety of reasons, youth will not go.



POSSE is (at least currently) an information, referral and informal support project which uses peer outreach workers to help young people make informed choices. It is not a direct service agency, e.g., it does not provide formal counselling, it does not provide housing, it does not provide employment services, etc. It gives information to

youth about the choices they are making, provides some basic equipment and supplies to help people reduce risk, and provides information on other services which youth may decide to use.

This is an important difference because, even though there may be an important unmet need for youth in your community, POSSE may not be able to respond to it directly. POSSE could let other agencies know about this need and even work with other organizations to try and address it. But, if it is a direct service, it is not within POSSE's current mandate to develop a direct service to meet such a need.

This step of "gaps analysis" is important because your next step will be designing the services you want to provide.

Finally, be aware that youth needs may change over time. If you get POSSE up and running, you will start receiving lots of feedback from youth about what is happening on the ground. Over time, you need to always be listening. Are there new needs emerging? Is there new information that is required by youth? And to which of these new things can POSSE respond?

f) Designing the Service

i) What does POSSE Outreach Look Like?

During time that weather permits (June to the end of October each year), POSSE does outreach into the community where youth congregate. Paid youth outreach workers, who have been trained and work in pairs, go out with an adult and meet and talk to young people (usually, a volunteer youth in training is with the adult). The adult, who is usually a POSSE staff person, generally stays in the background, perhaps at a spot in the mall or in a parked car near where the outreach workers are. The outreach workers carry with them information pamphlets and kits of supplies and equipment (the adult carries extra supplies and information brochures) and, based on conversations they have with other youth, they respond to issues raised in the conversation. They start their conversations with general "icebreakers" such as, "how's it going?" Sometimes the outreach workers may offer information or raise an issue themselves. Their response to a conversation may involve handing out a pamphlet or a kit, make a suggestion about a service the young person can contact (referral) or it may become an informal listening / counselling session. Many times it is just conversation. They each carry a POSSE "walkie talkie" which is used for communication purposes with

the adult working with them and with other outreach workers.

When the shift is completed, the outreach workers complete contact sheets for each person to whom they have talked which profiles the nature of the issues which came up, how they handled it, and some basic information on the person they were speaking to. Only first names (or street names) are used on these contact sheets to identify youth.

While the content of what you might need to include in your outreach work might vary from what POSSE includes, the overall approach shouldn't. The essential components are:

- Youth as peer outreach workers
- Extensive training of outreach workers
- Outreach activities at appropriate times
- Adult accompaniment
- Resources (such as information pamphlets, kits of supplies and equipment)
- Record keeping

Critical to all these, of course, are the actual services you are going to provide: information, referral and distribution of kits. You may think of some others. POSSE, for example, provides a wide range of services through its outreach, including:

- Information about youth services
- Referrals to youth services
- Referrals to shelter
- Information about harm reduction

- Needle Exchange information and products Safer Sex Information and products (condoms & lube)
- Safer drug use kits
- Safer piercing kits
- Emergency and Food bank transportation (staff)
- Accompaniments to medical and court accompaniments
- Food vouchers
- Phone cards
- Emergency care kits (toiletries, socks, etc.)
- Crisis Intervention
- Need to talk about your problem(s) (staff)

Peer Outreach Support Services & Education (POSSE) Project

Mission Statement:

Peer Outreach Support Services & Education (POSSE) is a FREE service providing training, street level outreach, information and support to encourage safer decision making in reducing the risks associated with drug use, sex, homelessness, violence and discrimination. POSSE is a harm reduction and human rights project, run by youth for youth between the ages of 15-24, living in North Halton.

Vision:

Youth promoting youth power.

will benefit enormously from youth involvement. Youth know what other youth will accept and likely have a better sense of how they will best accept it.

ii) **A Clear Statement of Your Vision and Mission**

A helpful first step before beginning to design the service you want to provide is developing a clear statement of your mission and vision. You should have the whole group you have pulled together work on this together. If you share a vision and agree on a mission, then there will be fewer challenges along the way. In fact, it is really important from day-to-day that you keep this mission and vision alive - post it on the walls, refer to it when you are meeting, and share it with anyone who will listen. A shared vision is critical for any successful service or organization. Your possible funders will want to know about this as well.

g) **Services to be Offered**

What you will be offering should be directly related to the needs you identified earlier in your work. We describe the services POSSE provides in North Halton and you can use these as guidelines, but may need to change things according to your local circumstances.

In determining which services to provide, youth must be involved. Figuring out what services to provide - and how -

i) Information

The information provided by POSSE peer outreach workers includes verbal information they receive through their training on services, harm reduction, legal issues and anti-oppression issues such as homophobia, racism, sexism, violence, etc. They also have available for distribution printed materials on services available to youth in North Halton and harm reduction strategies for youth who are sexually active or using drugs (or thinking about either of these). A sample of some of the written information which POSSE provides can be found in Appendix 3.

ii) Referral

When peer outreach workers talk to other youth, they may learn about issues another young person is confronting. In fact, peer outreach workers are trained NOT to ask young people about their personal situation and to respond, instead, only to information that is revealed. If a situation is revealed, and a simple chat, informal counselling or information is not enough, the outreach worker may suggest that the young person seek support from an available service. They will provide contact information (verbally or in a pamphlet). If a young person needs transportation or someone to go with them, POSSE staff will follow up by accompanying the young person to an appointment when requested.

iii) Safer Drug Information Kits

“If we’re not educated then how will we know?” – a POSSE youth

“I learned about the dangers of smoking from plastic” –an Outreach contact

When someone reveals they are either sexually active or using drugs (or about to do so), the peer outreach worker will chat with the young person about risks, strategies for reducing these risks and, where needed, provide the young person with condoms and/or supplies and written material from POSSE's Safer Drug Information Kits (supplies in the drug kits are kept by the staff who make them available as needed).

POSSE did not at the outset discuss the specific contents of Safer Drug Kits with local police. Staff and youth both feel that the track record of



POSSE has been sound enough that they are not being questioned about it now, even three years into the project. This

may be a time when it is "easier to ask forgiveness than ask permission."

h) Designing the Delivery of Outreach Service

Once you have collectively decided on what services you need to provide, you have to start the design of how the service will be offered.

i) What Impact do you want POSSE Outreach to Have?

A good place to start is by being very clear about the impact you want your POSSE project to have. By impact, we mean what differences will POSSE make for:

- The young people who are reached by POSSE outreach
- POSSE peer outreach workers
- The community as a whole

This is important because if you are going to look for funding for POSSE, funders will want the answers to this question. The answers will also help you to shape the services of POSSE and the evaluation of POSSE - if you don't know what you are trying to achieve, it is hard to say whether you are doing a good job or not.

The kinds of impacts that POSSE in North Halton decided it wanted to have included the following:

- Youth making safer decisions pertaining to 'risk' behaviours

- Youth having more acceptance of individual difference (race, sexual orientation, gender identity)
- Increase in youth reporting they are accessing services
- Reduced incidence of HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, unplanned pregnancy, accidental drug overdose.
- Increased and new skills among peer outreach workers.

ii) The Outreach Service Itself

On the next few pages you will find critical questions you need to answer when you are designing your service and some ideas based on how POSSE has dealt with them.



image from [The Undercroft](#)

ISSUE	POSSE 'S EXPERIENCE
<p>How many staff will you need and what skills do they need to have?</p>	<p>At least one staff person is required to make POSSE run effectively. POSSE has two staff people, one on a part time basis.</p> <p>Along with any skill sets and experience that a staff person has to have, e.g., experience working with at-risk youth, communication skills, organizational skills, there is, according to POSSE youth, a critical need to hire someone who youth will trust. This may be a bit intangible, but unless it can be found, POSSE will have a hard - if not impossible - time getting off the ground.</p> <p>This is, along with the commitment to youth empowerment which POSSE has, an important reason for having POSSE youth involved in the hiring process of staff.</p> <p>A copy of the POSSE staff job descriptions is included in Appendix 1 and staffing is discussed in Section 6, starting on page 44.</p>
<p>How many peer outreach workers will you need? Adults to back them up?</p>	<p>It depends on a number of things: how many youth are you trying to reach? How many outreach shifts will there be? Normally, a team of 2 peer outreach workers with a volunteer peer outreach worker and a staff person does only 1 shift a week, and POSSE does outreach 3 evenings a week from June through the end of October. A peer outreach worker can work for 2 years with POSSE - the first year as a volunteer and in the second year can get paid. Normally, POSSE recruits 6 youth to be paid PEER outreach workers every year (2 for each community in North Halton).</p> <p>Youth cycle through POSSE in the first year as volunteers being trained, in the second year as paid outreach workers (they again go through the training) and in the third year as trainers of other youth.</p>

ISSUE	POSSE 'S EXPERIENCE
	<p>In figuring out how many youth you will need as peer outreach workers, keep in mind that, as POSSE was developing, at no time did 2 male outreach workers work the same shift - it would have been too intimidating to young women and having a young woman there as an outreach worker is critical in this regard. As the program has become better known, this is no longer an issue.</p> <p>In POSSE's case, staff serve as the adults who back up peer outreach workers. If you were to use non-staff, you would need to make sure they are at least as well-trained as the peer outreach workers.</p>
When will you do outreach?	Consider seasons, weather, school hours, travel time to get to outreach locations. POSSE requires a 3 hour shift commitment from each peer outreach worker each week during the months of training and outreach.
Develop staff and peer outreach workers job descriptions.	Decide what it is you expect staff and peer outreach workers to do and then create a job description for both positions which explains this clearly.
Finding peer outreach workers	Because POSSE developed out of an existing project (the Hepatitis C Project), many of the youth who had been active on that project later became active in POSSE. Others were recruited as friends of Hepatitis C youth volunteers. As the project has continued from year to year, recruiting has included youth who first came into contact with POSSE as youth on the street. Others are recruited through friendships. Yet others are recruited by staff through staff outreach to youth attending other services (e.g., the sexual health clinic). All youth who are participating must first be screened and then trained before becoming active as peer outreach workers.

ISSUE	POSSE 'S EXPERIENCE
	A copy of the POSSE peer outreach worker job descriptions is included in Appendix 1.
Screening of peer outreach workers	Staff and other youth interview potential youth outreach workers during the recruitment process and screen out people who they feel would not be appropriate for the program for a variety of reasons. POSSE makes room for users (although they cannot be using when on shift), and much of the screening is focused on anti-oppression issues.
Training of peer outreach workers	<p>POSSE in North Halton provides 60 hours of training for peer outreach workers and an absence from 2 sessions will mean that someone can stay involved as a volunteer but not do outreach. They can, however, return the following year for training to become an outreach worker.</p> <p>Training can be designed and facilitated by a combination of peer outreach veterans, POSSE staff and a variety of professionals in the community (some of whom you may have talked to when originally gathering information about youth needs in the community). Peer outreach workers say that whoever facilitates training needs to make it fun and be youth-friendly!</p> <p>Training sessions are evaluated by participants, and the feedback is used to make changes and improve training in the future.</p>
Content of training	<p>What goes into training peer outreach workers is driven by a combination of POSSE values and principles and your service plans. POSSE training in North Halton includes the following:</p> <p>Training in POSSE includes: diffusing violence, suicide assessment, sexual assault, anti-racism (2 levels), anti-sexism, anti-homophobia (2 levels), sexual health, harm</p>

ISSUE	POSSE 'S EXPERIENCE
	reduction, HIV/AIDS prevention, systemic oppression, communication, grief and bereavement, hate crimes, etc.
Payment to peer outreach workers	2 peer outreach workers from each community in North Halton (there are three communities - 6 workers in all) receive an honorarium of \$10.00 an hour for all outreach-related work (unless they miss too many training sessions).
Locating and getting materials from others to support outreach	<p>The work you did in talking to other agencies and people about POSSE when you first started should pay off now. You will need to get copies of pamphlets about services in the community and accurate information about harm reduction strategies in the areas of sexuality and drug use and anti-oppression issues, e.g., homophobia, racism, sexism, violence, etc. If possible, look to see if others have out together small guides to services, harm reduction or other issues to reduce the material peer outreach workers have to carry around.</p> <p>You also need to figure out what your peer outreach workers can be providing in the nature of supplies and safer drug information kits. Once this is determined, condoms or equipment for safer drug information kits also need to be found.</p>
Record Keeping	<p>POSSE keeps records on the following aspects of outreach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All peer outreach contacts and unusual occurrences (form included in Appendix 4) which contains a significant amount of information • Distribution of Safer Drug Information Kits, their contents and other supplies, used whenever Kits or supplies from Kits are distributed (the form is in Appendix 4) • Outreach statistics forms

iii) **Managing “Risk” During Outreach**

POSSE has taken policy decisions to minimize risk to peer outreach workers during outreach.

Outreach workers always work in teams of two. An adult is available in a backup role in a location close to where outreach activities are taking place (usually, a volunteer youth in training is with the adult). All peer outreach workers are equipped with a “walkie talkie” for quick connection to that adult and other emergency services that might be required (usually, a volunteer youth in training is with the adult). The adult carries a cell phone. Finally, the training which POSSE outreach workers are required to take includes exploration of risk situations and how to handle them effectively. e.g., defusing potential violence.

There is another aspect to managing risk which is related to the fact that peer outreach workers may be involved in distributing equipment related to drug use. Although it is almost always the adult working the outreach shift who distributes the drug information kits or injection kits, youth workers need to know the risks in providing these services, e.g., distributing drug kits, and need to be able to justify the risk for themselves.

Discussion with police through the development phase of POSSE can help reduce risk by assisting you to determine what is allowable, what isn’t allowable or even how distribution might occur to minimize legal risks for workers. Having said this, POSSE staff advise that initial contacts with police should be high-level sharing with senior officers: “this is who we are” and “this is what harm reduction is”. POSSE peer outreach workers and staff agreed that knowing the issues associated with harm reduction and being knowledgeable (having the information), both of which are gained in training, are the best method for helping peer outreach workers come to terms with their legal risks.⁶

Having said this, all POSSE peer outreach workers are required to sign a waiver and, if they are not yet eighteen years old, their parents must also sign this form. A copy of the POSSE Waiver Form can be found in Appendix 1.

i) **Dialogue and Relationship Building with the Police**

Throughout this section, we have talked about the relationship with police in a community. Doing this type of work

⁶ One of the risks which outreach peer workers might face involves approaching other young people who are actively using. If police intervene because drugs are being used, the workers can tell the police what is happening and the adult working with the youth can talk to the police and help sort things out.

may involve you in doing things that are seen as not acceptable by the police, so working on the relationship is important.

In the first phases of POSSE's development, staff were in touch with high level contacts in the police, not "beat cops". They used these initial conversations to say "this is who we are" and this is what harm reduction is. Over time, POSSE has built a good working relationship with police. Its track record is solid and POSSE even involves police in training of youth outreach workers around issues related to defusing violence, dealing with violence and determining what constitutes a hate crime.

"I have a better understanding of my rights and realize that there are some good officers out there."
– a POSSE youth



j) Reporting to the Collaborative

A summary of peer outreach activities is provided at each meeting of the Collaborative by staff and youth.

k) Hiring Staff

Because of the way POSSE developed in North Halton out of another project, the POSSE Coordinator was the key person in pulling POSSE together. If you are looking to start a POSSE project in your community, the decision about what a staff person should do and when they should be hired is important. Generally, in POSSE's opinion, the sooner the better. Having someone on board as early as possible makes sense since she or he could be involved in bringing young people into the organization and take on some of the discussions with community organizations, but you have to find the funding first. In the end, it is the decision of youth who are involved, and it is critical that youth be involved in the hiring process no matter where you are at in developing the project. The right staff person can make or break the project! A copy of the POSSE staff job description is included in Appendix 1.

l) Evaluation

A later section in this Manual deals with evaluation of POSSE in detail. We are mentioning it here only to emphasize how important it is,

particularly if you are seeking funding for POSSE. You have to keep really good records including statistics, minutes of meetings, policies and serious occurrences. If you do not do this, and have this information linked back to what you are trying to achieve, you will have a hard time convincing anybody the program is worth funding. It also makes it a lot easier to figure out what is working and what is not working in the program. For example, it is better to be able to prove that you are getting more requests for help from youth around one issue than another. Simply "feeling" that this is the case is not enough. So, plan to get your record keeping in order!

m) What are the Rules / Policies?

There are a wide number of policies and rules which have been developed at POSSE over time. Here we will try to briefly outline the most important ones.

i) Expectations of and Policies Related to Peer Outreach Workers

- Peer outreach workers are expected to maintain confidentiality and must sign a confidentiality agreement (see a copy of this agreement in Appendix 1). Limits to confidentiality in relation to themselves or others are explained to them.
- Participants under the age of 18 must have prior parental consent from

their parent or guardian to participate unless they are living on their own.

- Services are focused on youth age 15 to 24 years of age (youth who fall outside these categories are referred to staff for conversations and discussions about their situation).
- Peer outreach workers may or may not be on probation, and may or may not have a previous criminal record. Decisions will depend on the nature of the offence and are discussed when inviting youth to participate and interviewing them.
- Peer outreach workers in a paid position cannot miss more than 3 training sessions or they cannot do outreach.
- Any use or threat of violence results in immediate expulsion from POSSE.
- Peer-youth workers are expected to arrive on time for their scheduled shifts. Missed shifts will not be paid for. This includes inclement weather, staff sickness, or any other reason a shift may be called off.
- In outreach, only first names or nicknames are used.
- Contact information must be recorded by outreach workers at the end of shift.

The commitment to POSSE is for one year with a 3 hour commitment per week for 40 weeks.

ii) **Decision Making**

Decision-making in POSSE is done on a consensus basis, whether in peer outreach meetings and training or in the Collaborative. This does NOT mean everyone has to agree with the decision, but it does mean that everyone has to be prepared to say they can live with the decision. Sometimes this process takes a little longer because it is important that different viewpoints be heard. Normally, in POSSE, we are able to come to a consensus on an issue.

If absolutely necessary, POSSE decisions can be taken by a vote, but we are very careful when that happens to ensure that the decision which will be taken would not result in anyone or any group being oppressed, i.e., kept out or in some way discriminated against. POSSE considers 75% (not 51%) to be a majority.

iii) **Complaints Policy**

POSSE has taken a policy decision that if a peer outreach worker has a complaint against any staff person of POSSE and cannot speak with them directly they can contact any member of the Collaborative or the Executive Director at The AIDS Committee of Guelph and Wellington County to lodge a complaint.

n) **Dealing with Community Concerns**

i) **What Might Community Concerns / Resistance Look Like?**

At first, it might not seem like there would be a lot of reasons for a community to not support a project that will help youth be safer, find housing, and deal with issues such as racism and homophobia, homelessness, violence or lack of a job. But, in fact our experience indicates there are people who do not support the type of work POSSE does.

Based on what has happened to us, we think the concerns and sometimes opposition breaks down into three sets of concerns: opposition to harm reduction generally, support of a "get tough" approach to dealing with issues faced by youth and concerns about safety for POSSE peer outreach workers. Often these concerns are expressed when some people becomes aware that POSSE is distributing condoms or that some of the literature which is handed out is very explicit.

Overall, keep in mind the following:

- Youth should be the spokespeople with adults in a supporting role
- Your early identification and recruitment of friends and allies can pay off now by mobilizing credible voices in the community to speak with

you on issues which concern the community

- Use the research and information on needs that you have
- Use examples from other communities
- Continue to build relationships
- Don't be blindsided - be prepared

ii) **Opposition to Harm Reduction**

Some people who have trouble with POSSE do not agree with harm reduction as a strategy. They believe that a "just say no" approach - getting people to stop the risky behaviour - is the best way to deal with issues such as drug use and sexually transmitted diseases. They believe that by giving young people information and resources that help them make safer choices that POSSE encourages sexual activity, pregnancy and drug use.

It is not easy to persuade a lot of these people that sexual activity and drug use is going to happen with or without POSSE.

The best argument to use when you talk to people like this is to point out that in spite of the many programs available which encourage "just say no", teen pregnancies, the transmission of sexual diseases and drug use continues in your community. Youth are the strongest spokespeople you can use to get this message across. The simple fact is that some youth will NOT "just say no". POSSE's position is that since young people are going to experiment, it is

critical that they have the information and resources which will help keep them safe. The role of harm reduction strategies in a larger effort to reduce sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy and drug use is well understood by professionals in the field. And it is important for people to know that POSSE allows young people who might not otherwise seek help to find the support they need.

It is also helpful to have a Collaborative in place which includes agencies with credibility in the community. As a group, you can be speaking collectively about this. You may not be able to change a lot of minds, but your use of evidence and facts will give your argument credibility.

iii) **Responding to "Get Tough" Approaches**

This response from people can range from them using stereotypes about homeless youth through to the position that drugs are illegal and that POSSE is helping people commit crimes. Youth are the best people to respond to these arguments.

Some of this can be dealt with through information, e.g., information about the number of homeless youth who are fleeing violence at home and the lack of youth shelter beds. The more informed people actually become about the REAL conditions faced by youth, the

more likely they will begin to understand what POSSE is trying to do. They may not always agree, but they may become less vocal or upset.

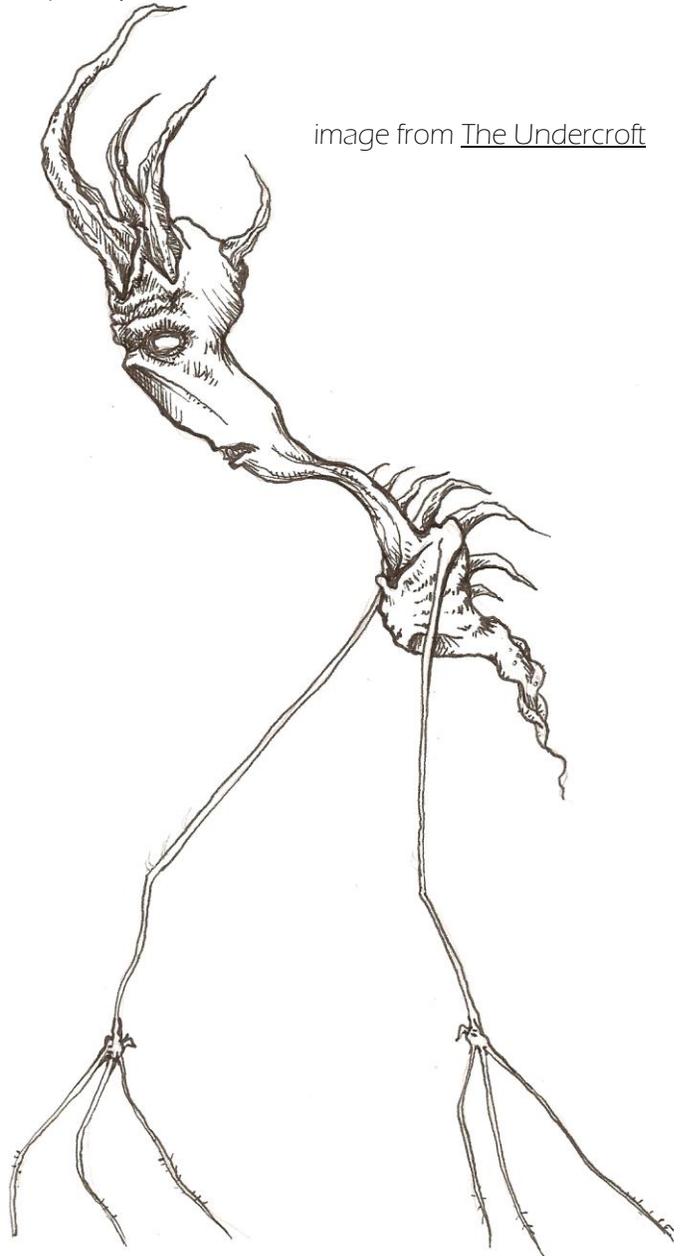
In relation to drug use, this is where your background work with the police in your community may assist. You may actually find some support among the police for what you are doing, or at least they may be able to advise you about how to do what you are doing with a minimum risk to yourself. Ultimately, however, it comes down to the same argument as before: "get tough" approaches have not worked and youth are still using drugs. Since young people are going to experiment with drugs - whether they are legal or not - it is critical that they have the information and resources which will help keep them safe. **Remember - someone can't quit if they're dead!**

iv) **Safety**

Some people may have concerns about the safety of POSSE youth doing outreach, particularly young women. In this case, the best strategy is to share openly the numerous steps which have been taken to keep youth workers safe: youth work in teams, there is always an adult present within eyesight (usually a volunteer youth in training is with the adult), youth are well trained and youth are always in touch with an adult and therefore to emergency services through their "walkie talkies". Finally, POSSE makes sure that youth from one community in North Halton actually do

outreach work in another community in order to remain anonymous.

Finally, when POSSE youth outreach workers are trained, they are encouraged to trust their gut / intuition and to use a code word with their outreach partner if they feel it is important to get out of a situation quickly.



From the Front Lines...A Youth Perspective

On the first training night of P.O.S.S.E, I was clueless about what to expect. To be honest, I was actually kind of scared. I've never been good with meeting new people and the idea of sitting in a room with people I didn't know for prolonged periods of time wasn't very appealing to me. However, the moment I walked down the stairs into the training room, I knew this was my new home. I made an instant connection with the group.

Over the course of five months, I met many people I never thought I'd have the opportunity to meet. Many guest speakers came into to speak with us. When they came in to see us, it wasn't as if they were there to bore us and tell us a bunch of information we'd forget. It was more of a discussion within the group. I've heard so many unique life experiences and met people that have taught me to think outside of the "box". I have stretched my mind so far and P.O.S.S.E has shown me a new way of thinking.

Some of the training sessions weren't easy. Some were emotionally draining and hard to get through, but I got through them. I made some new friends and we were there to support each other through the training sessions we were having trouble with. It's amazing what one training session can do to someone. On some nights, I would go to training with a heavy heart and no hope, but I would leave with a smile on my face and hope that I can make a difference in my life and in the lives of many other people.

Each night, I went in with an open mind. If there's one thing P.O.S.S.E has taught me, it's to always have an open mind and to be accepting of others. It has taught me to celebrate the differences we all have and to always listen and learn about other people.

I know I'm never going to forget the people I met at P.O.S.S.E. I stay in touch with most of them and see them often through outreach or simply out in the community. Some of the friendships I built at P.O.S.S.E will stay with me forever. It has become a place where I belong and somewhere I can be myself and feel accepted. It's one of the only places I can truly be myself and say what's really on my mind.

Continuing to support P.O.S.S.E is the only socially conscious option to us. I had a conversation with a friend about why I believe P.O.S.S.E has to continue. They asked me "Alex, why is it *such* a big deal to you that P.O.S.S.E keeps going? Why is it *so* important?" I smiled at them and replied with "Well, there are people who need help, and there are always going to be people who need help. And there's always going to be people who want to help them. People like me." They nodded and seemed to understand what I was trying to say. No one should be alone and with P.O.S.S.E, no one is alone. Finding something to stand for and believe in is why we live. P.O.S.S.E. gives youth that opportunity.

Alex

Staffing

On one hand, if you were to talk to youth involved in POSSE and members of the Collaborative, each and every one of them would probably tell you that the success of POSSE in North Halton is largely due to the staff.

On the other hand, if you were to talk to the staff of the POSSE project in North Halton, they would probably tell you that the success of POSSE in North Halton is largely due to the youth.

And this difference in perspective indicates precisely the importance of getting the right staff for a POSSE project: the commitment to youth empowerment and a youth-driven project runs deep in POSSE and staff have modeled this from the very beginning, from when POSSE was just an idea to where it is today.

It is no surprise then that there is a deep consensus on the qualities a POSSE staff person should have.

a) **Required POSSE Staff Qualities and Skills**

So who makes for a great POSSE staff person?

Youth and Collaborative members are very clear about the qualities of the "right" staff person:

- Ideally, POSSE staff should "have been there, done that". In other words, while it is possible to gain knowledge through education and training, there is strong consensus on the fact that unless you have been "at risk", "curious" or "adventurous", you cannot work with youth in a way that will allow the deep trusting relationship which has grown between staff and youth outreach workers in POSSE.
- Staff have to be youth friendly and deeply committed to meaningful participation and engagement of youth. This means they have to always behave in ways that ensure youth feel empowered, liked and respected. How this is done might change from person to person, but it is a non-negotiable - it has to be there.
- Staff must be non-judgmental. At the first sign of being "judged", youth who could benefit from involvement in or service from POSSE will disappear. This does not mean a staff person would tolerate inappropriate behavior from youth but it does mean being open to all youth and having an ability to REALLY see the person underneath.
- Strong understanding and analysis of youth empowerment, anti-oppression and harm reduction. There not only has to be a good understanding of these issues, but staff need to actively model behavior which challenges things such as racism,

homophobia, harassment and the use of violence to solve problems.

- Staff need to be constantly working "on the ground", connected and available to youth
- Knowledgeable about the issues and the resources in the community.
- Trusted by youth and adults both. While it is critical that youth trust staff, it is equally important that adults also trust staff. Without this, POSSE will not be able to communicate effectively with members of the Collaborative, service partners, decision-makers and the community at large.
- Good communication skills. The staff person needs to be able to talk easily with all sorts of different people. She or he also needs to have good writing skills as she or he will probably be having to develop reports, funding proposals and so on.
- A sense of humor is important. The work that has to be done is sometimes very challenging and when things get tense, a sense of humor is a real gift.
- Staff need to be people you can speak to freely and have to be open-minded (Having said this, it is important as was talked about before that everyone understands the limits on confidentiality.)
- Trusted references are important and even more important is REALLY talking to them if you are talking to them about a staff person you are considering hiring.

b) Hiring Process for Staff

POSSE has adopted the following process for hiring staff.

- A hiring group is formed composed of three or four individuals, 2 of whom MUST be youth. There must never be more adults than youth on this group.
- Positions are advertised
- Applicants are screened and interviews offered where appropriate
- Hiring group establishes interview questions and discusses how applicants will be evaluated
- Hiring group makes a decision regarding the successful candidate - youth have the final say.
- Youth from the hiring group share this decision with the larger group of youth in the project and this group makes a consensus decision regarding making an offer of employment
- Employment contract is finalized by hiring group
- Probation period - POSSE youth and staff recommend to other projects that there be a 6 month probation so that staff have to go through 2 phases of POSSE work, both the training and the outreach phases of the annual cycle (e.g., someone could be a great training person but lousy at outreach - or vice versa)

POSSE's situation in North Halton was unique - in essence, through the work the staff coordinator had done with youth in the area, she and the youth created her position as they grew POSSE.

This may - or may not - happen in your own situation.

c) A Final Note on Staffing

The Collaborative, youth and staff all pointed out the need for staff from the project and staff from the flow through agency to act as supervisors to each other to make sure people on both sides are doing their jobs and that, as one person put, it "no-one is screwing around".

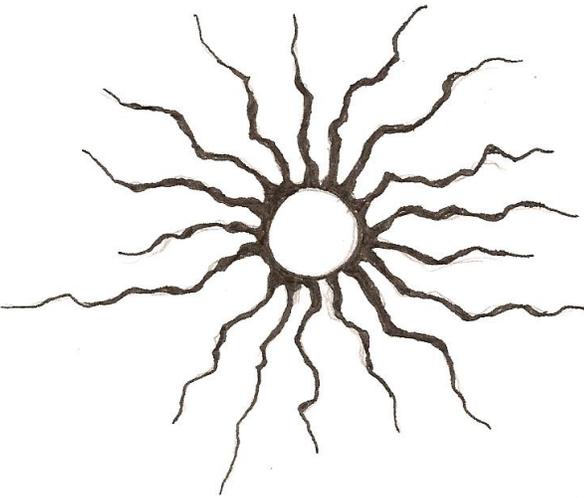


Image from The Undercroft

Training

"I loved every minute of it. I have learned so much and now hope that I can take what I've learned and pass it on" – a POSSE youth

Training is a critical process for POSSE. Through training, youth outreach workers gain the knowledge and skills they need to do their jobs effectively and safely.

POSSE requires all youth who will be doing outreach) to receive 60 hours of training. If a paid youth misses more than three training sessions, she or he can no longer be paid (although they can participate in outreach as a volunteer worker who stays with staff during outreach activities). They could then do paid outreach the next year after going through the training again.

a) **What is Covered in Training?**

Given the principles and values which drive POSSE, it is not surprising that the training which youth receive is shaped by and reinforces these values and principles. This is reflected in the topics which are covered in training. Training is, however, also shaped by the particular service POSSE is providing and you would, along with youth in your POSSE project, need to determine what is going to be covered.

We have tried not to repeat things we mention elsewhere in this Manual

However, in this case POSSE youth and staff felt that the content of training was worth repeating.

In North Halton, training includes:

- diffusing violence
- suicide assessment
- sexual assault
- anti-racism (2 levels)
- anti-sexism
- anti-homophobia (2 levels)
- age discrimination
- human rights legislation and issues
- sexual health
- HIV/AIDS prevention
- systemic oppression
- communication
- grief and bereavement
- hate crimes
- information on drugs in use in the community and their impact
- harm reduction principles and strategies, e.g., information about diseases and how you can transmit them and reduce the risk of getting them
- information on community services which are available for youth
- information about diseases and how you can transmit them
- strategies and skills for doing effective outreach
- to make a more level playing field with adults in the project:
 - meeting rules (how to meet)
 - budgets
 - how to get along with adults
 - how to facilitate

b) Who Designs and Delivers the Training?

In the first year of the North Halton project, staff and youth together determined the content of the training.

In the second and following years, POSSE was able to draw on the experience of youth outreach workers who had been active in the first year of the project. Outreach workers who had "graduated" were involved in shaping the training. This process continues today so that the training which is provided is shaped by the experience youth the previous year had. They bring a perspective to training which cannot be found in any other way.

The actual training is provided primarily by people from the community with experience and skills in the topic which is being covered. These trainers bring their own resource material which is provided to youth who are being trained so there is no overall training manual. Instead, training is seen as a dynamic process which shifts from year to year, driven by experience and what is happening in the community and on the streets.

POSSE youth indicate that who does the training is important. Trainers have to be youth friendly, have to have experience and need to make their piece

of the training interesting and fun, despite the seriousness of the topics.

c) Be Prepared to Train as Issues Arise

Throughout the year, issues may arise which require additional training.

A good example of this in POSSE in North Halton was how POSSE responded to the need to evaluate its work both for its own sake (to make better decisions about what to change and what to keep the same) as well as for funders and the community.

Rather than hiring someone from the outside to design an evaluation process for POSSE, a consultant trusted by staff and youth came in and trained youth about evaluation, i.e., what evaluation is supposed to do and steps and resources required. Based on this training, youth designed the major evaluation survey which is administered by the youth themselves to youth in the community who have used POSSE services. The result has been not only a good evaluation process, but a new set of skills learned by many POSSE youth.

As noted above, there is no formal Training Manual which POSSE uses. Year to year, training (which covers issues listed above) is tailored to meet the needs of the youth who will be working on outreach and shaped by those who did

outreach the previous year. Community trainers bring their own resource material which is given to youth receiving the training. In some cases, they are reimbursed for this material and an honorarium is paid.

However, a sample of some of the training material which has been used is attached in Appendix 3.

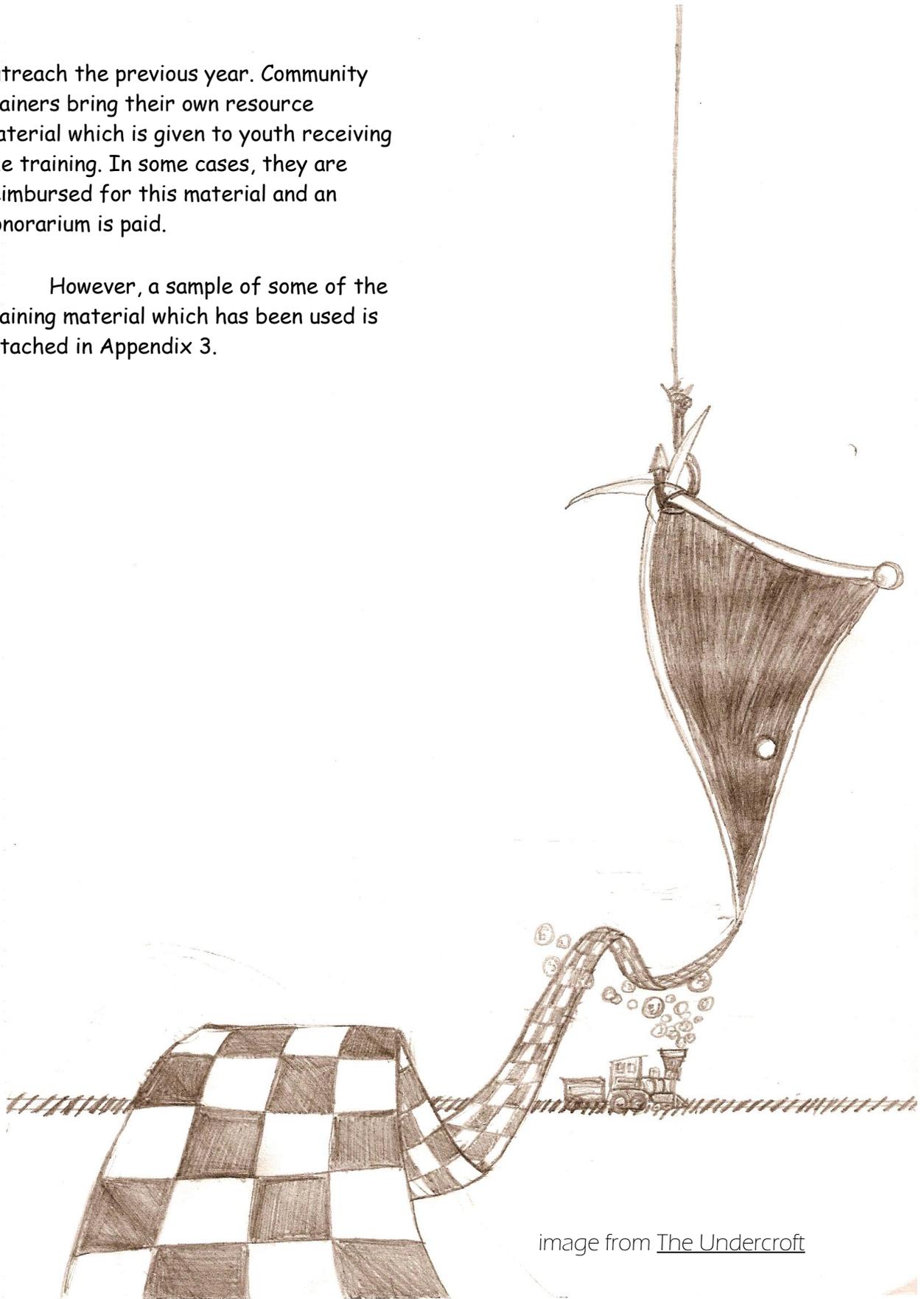


image from The Undercroft

Evaluation

a) Why evaluate?

Many people see evaluation as something which tells you when you have a success and when you have a failure. POSSE takes a different approach - POSSE sees evaluation as a process which tells you what you are doing well and where you could improve.

So, why evaluate?

- To make better decisions about the services POSSE offers
- To show or persuade funders of the value of POSSE (funders require evaluation anyway)
- To get information which shows the community and decision-makers why POSSE is important

b) Outcomes: What are you trying to accomplish?

When you designed the services your POSSE project would provide in your community, we suggested you take some time to figure out the impact you wanted your POSSE project to have, In other words, we asked you to think about the differences POSSE would make for:

- The young people who are reached through POSSE outreach
- POSSE outreach workers themselves
- The community as a whole

The kinds of impacts that POSSE in North Halton decided it wanted to have included the following:

- Youth making safer decisions pertaining to 'risk' behaviours
- Youth having more acceptance of individual difference (race, sexual orientation, gender identity)
- Increase in youth reporting they are accessing services
- Reduced incidence of HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, unwanted pregnancy, accidental drug overdose.
- Increased and new skills among peer outreach workers.

When you start to think about evaluation, you need to go back to these hoped-for impacts and start thinking about them as OUTCOMES.

What is an OUTCOME? An OUTCOME is a measurable change or benefit which your service causes for someone for something. In the case of POSSE, we believe POSSE has outcomes for youth in the community, POSSE youth outreach workers and the community as a whole. The key to evaluation is figuring out how to measure these changes and then doing it.

c) Steps in Evaluation

1. Figure out what your intended outcomes are for: youth receiving service, youth providing the service, the community at large (they will not

be the same in all cases). Think about how you designed your service - what impacts did you want to have? These are your outcomes although you might have to change the language a bit to make sure you have zoomed in on the change or benefit linked to this impact.

2. Determine how you would measure these outcomes. In each case, what evidence or information would you need to have to know these benefits or changes had happened. These are called INDICATORS in evaluation language, and each outcome should have an indicator or set of indicators linked to it.
3. Set up the systems to gather this information and start gathering it. In some cases, you may need to create surveys or interviews, and in others you may need to use information from other sources, such as your Health department or substance use surveys being done by government.
4. Based on the information you gather, you can then develop reports for the use of your Collaborative, funders, decision-makers and the community at large.

Remember as you do this work that sometimes benefits or changes happen fast and other times it takes a long time for these changes or benefits to show. In evaluation terms, this means

that there are short term, medium term and long term outcomes. Be aware of this and realize that it may take several years before some of your outcomes can be measured - others can be measured really quickly.

d) POSSE's Approach to Evaluation

POSSE, with youth involvement from the outset, developed an evaluation strategy which looks at a lot of things:

- What happens for youth outreach workers by having them evaluate each segment of training, the training overall and by tracking what happens to them while involved in POSSE and afterwards (for example, POSSE uses testimonials from youth outreach workers who have had changes in their own lives because of their involvement with POSSE)
- Profiling the youth who are in contact with youth outreach workers and the services they receive by gathering information after each shift in the shift reports completed by outreach workers. This information lets POSSE tell the community about the number of youth being reached, the issues with which they are dealing and the kind of services they are needing and using (see the shift report form in Appendix 4).

- Doing a survey (face-to-face) of youth who have received POSSE services which asks them about the changes in their lives and behaviours as well as their evaluation of POSSE's outreach efforts.

All this information lets POSSE put together reports on how effective it is in having an impact on youth outreach workers and youth in the community. The longer term impacts of POSSE cannot be measured yet and will depend on data from other sources, e.g., what is happening to substance use statistics, teen pregnancies, the rates of sexually transmitted infections, etc. A sample of an actual POSSE evaluation report can be found in Appendix 4.

e) **Youth Involvement in Designing and Doing Evaluation**

As we talked about in the section on training (page 48), youth were involved in the design of POSSE evaluation. They were trained in how to evaluate and do much of the evaluation of the program themselves. The result has been not only a good evaluation process, but a new set of skills learned by many POSSE youth.

As with everything else in POSSE, youth involvement in the design and roll out of your evaluation will be critical.

“This program has opened my eyes. In the most subtle ways I know I can help someone else, and knowing that makes me want to do more...I feel they have taught me some of the most important life issues I will ever need to know. Thank you.”
– a POSSE youth

“I LOVE POSSE. I cannot start to explain how much I have enjoyed myself. I know now that I am a stronger individual and hope to help others adapt their way of thinking to one free of discrimination.”
- a POSSE youth.

Quotes such as the ones above are examples of the gifts you receive from evaluating.

Finding Funding

Before you start looking for funding, you will need to make some decisions about what this project is going to cost to operate for a year. Your first step in finding funding is, therefore, developing a budget.

a) Developing a Budget

You know what you want your POSSE project to do: the services you want to deliver, how many staff and peer outreach workers you are going to need and you are going to organize these services. You should also have figured out where the project would be located, the kind of training and resources for training you need and who will administer any money you may receive to operate the project. Based on all these things you need then to develop a budget which will give you a good idea of the resources you will need to operate the service.

Budget lines should include the following:

- Staff costs - what is the salary and the benefits to go with the salary you need to get the type of staff you want (this includes the employer's portion of Employment Insurance and Canada Pension Plan)
- Staff travel costs - there may be a fair bit of travel for staff getting to meetings, doing outreach, providing emergency rides or accompaniment of

youth to appointments, etc. What will this look like and how much will it cost?

- Peer Outreach Costs including
- Honorariums to youth (POSSE pays \$10/hour to six youth for a 40 week period every year, this honorarium, covering training time, meeting time and outreach time)
- Training
- Materials for Training (printing, etc.)
- Travel allowance if necessary (for outreach)
- Rent for office/meeting /storage space (you may be able to get some of this donated)
- Utilities - heat and electricity if not included in rental cost of the space you need
- Telephone - telephone costs for the office and for cell phones or walkie talkies for outreach
- Computers, printers (capital) - you will need a good computer, the software to go with it and a colour printer
- Internet - you need to be connected and you might want to consider web site costs as well
- Office supplies - paper, envelopes, stamps, paper clips
- Outreach supplies - brochures, condoms, etc.

A sample budget from POSSE is included in the Appendices.

b) Finding Funding or In Kind Support

Finding funding has never been easy but it is probably even more difficult these days. What is available may be different from province to province and even from community to community.

In looking for funding, be aware of the differences between funding for capital costs (like computers and phone sets) and operating costs. Some funders have a preference for one or the other - some fund both.

POSSE started with grants from the Halton Healthy Communities Fund and National Crime Prevention, followed by the Ontario Trillium Foundation which is prepared to invest in promising start up projects. However, the Trillium Foundation only funds in Ontario and, having funded the original POSSE, you might have to develop a different type of approach to them to find funding. Trillium will not fund ongoing operations year after year. Usually, there is a three year limit and you have to be able to prove you can sustain your project after the three years are completed.

Here are some other possible sources:

- Provincial ministries focused on youth or families, health or criminal justice (POSSE can be seen as crime prevention)

- Federal departments (those dealing with youth, employment, health and welfare, etc.)
- Private and charitable foundations with an interest in youth, crime prevention, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, health, etc. (many libraries have directories to foundations and you can always look on the web)
- Corporate sponsorship (the POSSE Collaborative has decided not to seek funding from big business as it feels big business generally does not have values which support the values of POSSE. However, this is a decision you would have to make yourselves for your own project.)
- Municipal social or community service departments, health departments

What are funders looking for? First, they are looking for projects that fit their priorities. Second, they are looking for evidence that the money they give you will be used for the purposes intended and that it will have an impact that can be measured. Therefore you have to be able to show that:

- The service will be well managed (often they ask for a "track record" which is why the host or flow through agency is so important (see page 12 for a description of this important role))
- That your proposal meets their funding priorities (funders have their own programs and priorities - your proposal needs to "fit")

- That the project will be well documented and evaluated with an eye on measuring outcomes

When putting your budget together, keep in mind that you may be able to get items donated. These are called "in-kind" donations and could range from office supplies and supplies for kits through to donated space. From a funder's perspective, "in-kind" support means community support - any in-kind support you can find is a real bonus.⁷

Finally, remember that funder staff people are there to help you. Take the time to contact them and start building a relationship with them. You never know...

c) Other Fund Raising

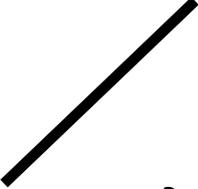
We will briefly mention here two other kinds of fund raising that you can do: special events and charitable donations.

Special event fundraising is focused on some kind of a special event (POSSE in North Halton does an annual Murder Mystery Dinner). Be aware that special event fund raising usually takes a lot of time and energy and sometimes the payoff is not as big as you would like.

⁷ You can look at POSSE's website to see what kind of supplies POSSE may be making available to other projects at a small cost.

However, every dollar raised is a dollar you did not have before. More important, special events also help you get a bigger profile in the community if they are properly advertised.

Finally, if your host or flow-through agency is a registered charity (and it should be), donations to the host that are directed to POSSE may be eligible for a charitable tax receipt. This way, people can get a benefit for donating to your group. Sometimes called "relationship fund raising", this approach to fund raising takes a while to develop and depends on establishing and keeping a really good relationship with lots of communication with donors. It is based on the notion that you don't really fund raise - instead, what you really do is "friend raise". It is probably worth talking to someone who does this kind of work before you go too far down this road. It works - but it takes skill and experience to make it really pay off.



From the Front Lines...

Before I joined with POSSE, I was barely attending High School doing hard drugs and drinking. I was ignorant of the risks of my behavior and slowly letting my life slip away. I joined POSSE the first year it was introduced into North Halton as the Hepatitis C program. I convinced one of my friends to attend the first meeting with me and eventually recruited about three or four more. We all had the same bad habits and the majority of us were kicked out of school by grade 11. I had joined when I was in grade 10 and had already tried cocaine, ecstasy, "special K" and meth as well as an avid drinker and smoker. I was getting involved with guys that never respected me and would lower my self-esteem even lower than it already had been. The first year of POSSE taught me how to safely use drugs, which I *strongly* encouraged my "drug buddies" to do as well. I continued my habits but was reducing my use quickly. This was because I now had something to do that meant something to me. I was out saving lives. I had dropped out of school at 16 due to family problems but continued with the project. I traveled to various conferences regarding youth and began my street outreach while slowly learning about all the issues that I had previously been so naïve to realize about the way my future was going to be. At this point in my life I was mainly a drinker but was sometimes influenced by old friends to dip into old habits.

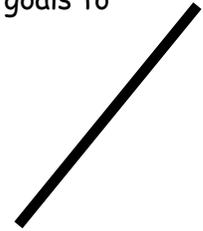
The program was showing me people that were letting drugs take them over, and I thought to myself... "Is this who I want to become?" I also saw young kids talking about pregnancies and adults spun on heroin. This really affected me because I realized that soon enough if I don't stop my habits I will be one of these people asking for more needles or referrals to doctors for STI's or pregnancy tests. This was when I realized I did not want this life. Helping these people gave me an enormous feeling of self-worth, that I could do more with my life than trip out on pills. Attending the conferences and speaking to the region also gave me confidence that I had never had before. At 17 I quit doing drugs and displaced myself from my old friends so that I would not fall back into it. This is when we began the third year of our outreach and I had the responsibility of training the new recruits. This experience was when I saw the affect that I was having on people's lives. I watched as my training group gained new respect for the diversity of people each week, as they gained new skills, and expanded their desire to help people the way that I did. I was now a mentor, when only two years ago I could not even guide myself in the right direction.

After this year I was no longer an outreach worker but still assisted in some of the events that POSSE had organized and took part in like the diversity march in Georgetown. I also helped with occasional office work or preparing outreach tools and was Assistant Editor of the Undercroft magazine and Assistant Coordinator of the Need A Lift Transportation project. By 18 I had enrolled in college and began my first semester when I was 19.

I am currently enrolled at Centennial College in the 3 year Human Resources Management Coop program with the option of upgrading to my bachelor's if I keep a B+ average. My marks are the majority of over 80% and I have taken a complete 180 towards life. I now respect myself, realize my potential, and for the first time have a boyfriend that respects me for me, treats me like gold and encourages me to follow my goals.

POSSE has given me the opportunity to find my true self and who I want to be. I have gained the skills and confidence I need to pursue my newly attained goals to live a better more fulfilling life.

Britnie



Appendix 1

Key POSSE Documents:

Vision and Mission
Collaborative Agreement
Letter of Understanding with Host Agency
POSSE Staff Job Description
POSSE Peer Outreach Worker Description of Duties
POSSE Peer Outreach Worker Waiver
POSSE 12-Month Operating Budget

Peer Outreach Support Services & Education (POSSE) Project

Mission Statement:

Peer Outreach Support Services & Education (POSSE) is a FREE service providing training, street level outreach, information and support to encourage safer decision making in reducing the risks associated with drug use, sex, homelessness, violence and discrimination. POSSE is a harm reduction and human rights project, run by youth for youth between the ages of 15-24, living in North Halton.

Vision:

Youth promoting youth power.

Peer Outreach Support Services and Education (POSSE)

Collaborative Agreement - Terms of Reference

- **1. Name:** Peer Outreach Support Services & Education (POSSE) Collaborative

2. Current Collaborative Partners and Voting Committee Members:

All members participate in bi-monthly collaborative meetings and sub-committee meetings as required. Role of organization is also outlined in letters of support attached.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Role of Organization</u>
-------------	---------------------	---------------------------------

A list of members and non-voting member appears here.

3. Purpose:

The POSSE Collaborative was formed in September 2003, as a youth driven initiative responding to the growing needs of underserved marginalized, at risk and diverse youth in North Halton. Youth in the community benefit through development and delivery of youth driven projects aimed at addressing local youth issues, meeting the needs of youth, capacity building and problem solving skills, harm / risk reduction, combating negative stereotypes about youth through community involvement, more supportive youth network through outreach activities to other youth in North Halton. The community benefits with more capable, skilled youth; youth engaged in positive activities reducing crime and at risk behaviours, and by understanding how best to meet the needs of youth in North Halton through education to agencies, businesses, schools and the community at large.

4. Mandate:

The POSSE Collaborative (also referred to as the "Community Advisory Committee" or the "committee") will function as the governing body of POSSE and assist the POSSE in project planning, implementing, overseeing, evaluating and sustaining a youth driven, peer outreach support service and education project for diverse, minority, at risk, high-risk, homeless youth and drug users in North Halton (Acton, Milton and Georgetown).

The committee will operate under the philosophy and values of the POSSE project and keep these values at the core of all decisions regarding the project. (See philosophy and values statement attached).

The POSSE project also seeks to change negative perceptions and attitudes of youth, at risk youth, marginalized youth, minority youth, including street involved youth and drug users; by providing youth with opportunities and public forums for youth to demonstrate their abilities, as well as advocating for youth and youth rights including human rights.

We are creating an environment for youth to access voluntarily. The POSSE project aims to be staffed and supported by people of various cultural and sub-cultural backgrounds, including those who have previously been at risk in their youth, or involved with the streets.

5. Committee Membership:

- Membership selection will be guided by the principles of the POSSE project's philosophy and values statement. The collaborative consists of those named in membership list. Additional members can be recruited and asked to join by any member of the collaborative and agreed upon by current members of the committee, all members agree to the philosophy and values of the POSSE project prior to active involvement.
- Members will provide training to youth peer educators and/or other supports to the POSSE project and/or project staff, as outlined in each partners support letter for the project and according to this partnership agreement.

- Membership shall strive to reflect a balance of diverse youth service and harm reduction organizations committed to ensuring youth driven peer-based services in North Halton, and a minimum of 3 youth peer outreach workers (one from each community - Acton, Milton & Georgetown) represented on the committee.
- All youth will receive remuneration for their participation on the committee and must be approved by the POSSE manager. This remuneration will be financial, unless otherwise arranged as volunteer or community service hours, with the project manager.
- The committee shall be composed of a maximum of 15 adult members and a minimum of 3 youth members. Youth members must have formerly been involved, or are currently involved in POSSE to be classified a member. All members are voting members.
- The POSSE collaborative was developed in September 2003. The length of term for members is ongoing. The commitment for the POSSE Youth - Human Rights and Harm Reduction Training Project is 4 years, beginning in 2005-2009. This agreement will be revisited in 2009.

6. Participation Guidelines:

- Be committed to the values and philosophies of POSSE and be committed to creating a meaningful youth friendly place for youth.
- Be committed to participating in committee meetings as an equal to everyone present and assist in removing all barriers to equality.
- Participate in both talking and listening; be courteous, speak in turn, and be open to other viewpoints and respectful of each other's opinions.
- Attend committee meetings regularly, complete assigned tasks and promote POSSE positively.
- Demonstrate concern for the needs of the youth.

- Serve on working groups.
- Send regrets for non-attendance to the Project Manager in advance of the meeting.
- In the event a member can no longer fulfill her/his commitment to the committee and a suitable replacement from her/his organization is not possible, and there are no other sector representatives from that sector serving on the committee, the Chair and Project Manager, in consultation with the committee, will develop a process to fill the position.

7. Decision Making Process:

- The committee will make decisions through a consensual decision-making process whereby all voting members can "support or live with the decision" even though it may not be an individual's preferred choice.
- In the event that consensus cannot be reached (i.e. the decision cannot be supported), a majority vote may be taken if at least two-thirds of the members (including two youth) are in attendance. Failure to vote by any member is deemed to be a vote in the negative. Any vote that ends in a tie is defeated.
- Upon considering majority rules voting it is critical each voting member consider their power and privilege in society and examine a decision's potential to oppress, to ensure all fairness to the minority voice.
- Any member with a conflict of interest on a specific issue will declare that conflict and abstain from voting.

8. Financial Management

The AIDS Committee of Guelph and Wellington County (ACG) will operate as the lead organization for the collaborative. ACG is designated by the collaborative to enter into the contractual relationship with funders. The ACG therefore signs the Letter of Agreement with a funder, on behalf of the POSSE Collaborative, accepts the funds and assumes responsibility for fiscal accountability and all other required reporting.

- POSSE staff with approval of the lead agency has the authority to spend money on behalf of the collaborative.
- Invoices are submitted by POSSE staff and paid by ACG. POSSE staff must be aware of all invoices submitted for POSSE initiatives.
- All fundraised dollars will be used according to the discretion of POSSE staff to a maximum of \$1000.00 and approved by the Executive Director of ACG or otherwise approved by the POSSE collaborative.
- Any expenditure exceeding \$1,000.00 not previously budgeted will require approval from the POSSE collaborative.
- All expenses and revenues will be recorded by the ACG financial management systems, and reported monthly to POSSE staff and shared at collaborative meetings.
- All assets remain with the POSSE collaborative as long as it continues developing and delivering projects. In the event POSSE ceases to exist, the assets will become the property of the lead agency, unless otherwise arranged with donating agency and POSSE collaborative.

9. Roles and Responsibilities:

- The POSSE collaborative is responsible for ten key tasks: 1. Steering toward the mission and guiding strategic planning; 2. Developing appropriate structures, policy and operating systems; 3. Ensuring the lead agency's board and collaborative each understands its role; 4. Ensuring that an effective management team is in place; 5. Participating in staff hiring and firing practices, including youth in all potential staff interviews; 6. Implementing assessment, evaluation and control systems; 7. Recruiting advisory members to the committee; 8. Advocating and promoting youth driven, peer based, harm reduction services for youth; 9. Communicating to members, stakeholders and the public; 10. Reviewing financial statements for POSSE and assisting in financial decision making for expenses exceeding \$1000.00.
- Each member is responsible to assist with these key functions as these issues are discussed at collaborative meetings.

As participating agencies in the POSSE collaborative, we the undersigned agree to the conditions outlined above in this Collaborative Agreement.
(Please sign below).

1. **Print Agency Name:** AIDS Committee of Guelph & Wellington County

Print Name: _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

2. **Print Agency Name:** Halton Alcohol, Drug & Gambling Assessment, Prevention & Treatment

Print Name: _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

3. **Print Agency Name:** Halton Hills Community Support & Information

Print Name: _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

...and so on...

Letter of Understanding

Between: POSSE (Peer Outreach Support Services and Education) North Halton Collaborative

and

AIDS Committee of Guelph and Wellington County (ACG)

The Peer Outreach Support Services & Education (POSSE) collaborative proposes the AIDS Committee of Guelph and Wellington County (ACG) act as an umbrella organization for administrative and support services (funding contracts) on behalf of the POSSE collaborative and all related projects. ACG agrees the POSSE collaborative is an independent program of ACG. Ownership of POSSE ultimately resides with the POSSE collaborative, of which ACG is a member. The project is governed and operated by a collaborative of agencies and youth, known as the Peer Outreach Support Services & Education (POSSE) collaborative or also referred to as the POSSE Community Advisory Committee. To maintain its independence, Peer Outreach Support Services and Education (POSSE) requests that the two parties agree to the following:

- All fundraised dollars will **not** be charged an administration fee and will be used according to the discretion of POSSE staff to a maximum of \$1000.00, and approved by the Executive Director of the ACG; or otherwise approved by the POSSE collaborative. Any amount exceeding \$1,000.00 will require approval from the POSSE collaborative.
- ACG, in partnership with the POSSE collaborative, will assist POSSE in securing future funding as required to continue the development and maintenance of services for youth in North Halton. ACG will serve as the sponsor (host) organization for the purposes of obtaining funding.
- Amendments to this agreement may not be made without consultation between ACG and POSSE and can only be amended in writing and must be signed by both parties.

- Termination of this agreement may be initiated by either party and requires a minimum of 60 days written notice, unless otherwise agreed.
- POSSE may move to another agency should the collaborative and staff deem it appropriate and in the best interest of POSSE.
- ACG will involve POSSE staff in all meetings regarding POSSE or meetings that will affect the governance and / or the operation of POSSE.
- POSSE will be charged a 10% administration fee of total contracted dollars or grants for the following administrative support: Employee payroll, all applicable tax deductions, gradual development (in conjunction with staff) of a workable banking system if required, monthly and yearly detailed financial statements provided to program staff and the POSSE collaborative, provide a yearly audit, WCB coverage, liability insurance, use of charitable tax number, support developing internal systems if required, planning, evaluation, and technical support if required. Unless otherwise agreed upon by both parties.
- POSSE will follow ACG financial management systems; and both parties will work together to ensure this system is effective and efficient for both.
- ACG will reimburse POSSE 50% GST, credited from the federal government, for all POSSE related expenses where GST was charged.
- POSSE reserves all rights to its name and concept.
- POSSE staff shall attend regular staff meetings at ACG as requested. ACG will be available to provide POSSE staff with support, mentoring and debriefing.
- ACG shall ensure staff wellness, equitable wages, minimum 15 working days holiday per year and an additional 5 working days after every 5 years service; paid statutory holidays; 21 days paid sick leave; time

off in lieu of overtime hours based on contracted hours of service according to funding (full time work week @ 35 hours per week); paid time for POSSE-related staff training and development; and reimbursement for work related travel. All of this is dependant on funding availability.

- ACG will advocate for and promote POSSE whenever possible and appropriate.
- POSSE will promote ACG whenever possible and appropriate.
- A representative of the ACG will attend POSSE collaborative meetings.
- ACG recognizes that the POSSE collaborative is responsible for eight key tasks:
 1. Steering toward the mission and guiding strategic planning;
 2. Developing appropriate structures, policy and operating systems;
 3. Ensuring the lead agency's board and collaborative each understands its role;
 4. Ensuring that an effective management team is in place;
 5. Participating in staff hiring and firing practices, including youth in all potential staff interviews;
 6. Implementing assessment, evaluation and control systems;
 7. Recruiting advisory members to the committee;
 8. Advocating and promoting youth driven, peer based, harm reduction services for youth;
 9. Communicating to members, stakeholders and the public.
- POSSE staff will comply with ACG policies regarding specific issues of agency liability.
- POSSE staff will comply with ACG policies as relevant to POSSE staff and clients, unless new policies are developed by POSSE collaborative.

- All money and assets generated for POSSE through contracts, donations, fundraising events and written proposals will remain dedicated to POSSE for the original intent of the funds.
- The POSSE collaborative will be governed by their own terms of reference (terms of reference /collaborative agreement attached - see appendix 1).

This agreement will govern the relationship between Peer Outreach Support Services & Education and the AIDS Committee of Guelph and Wellington County.

We the undersigned agree to the terms set out in this letter of understanding.

AIDS Committee of Guelph and Wellington County - Executive

Name: _____
(Please print)

Title: _____

Signature: _____

Date: ___/___/2004
D M Y

Peer Outreach Support Services & Education - Staff

Name: _____
(Please print)

Title: _____

Signature: _____

Date: ___/___/2004
D M Y

POSSE collaborative member - Chair

Name: _____
(Please print)

Title: _____

Signature: _____

Date: ___/___/2004
D M Y

**Peer Outreach Support Services & Education (POSSE) Project
AIDS COMMITTEE OF GUELPH & WELLINGTON COUNTY**

Project Manager / Youth worker

Position Type: Full-time **Job Region:** ON - Halton
Location(s): North Halton - Acton, Milton & Georgetown
Years Experience: 5+ years

Position Summary:

- To work with partner agencies to coordinate a non-judgmental, harm reduction, youth driven peer outreach to youth at risk in North Halton communities
- To maintain and develop positive relations with both youth and the community
- To provide youth with training to adequately provide front line support, education and referrals through street level outreach activities and as otherwise required.
- To supervise youth in training and street level outreach
- To provide support, accompaniments, crisis intervention, crisis counseling to youth as required.
- To advocate for youth driven projects, harm reduction and other youth issues with all levels of government and with other service agencies as necessary.

Responsibilities:

- Work with project partners to ensure project coordination
- Coordinate the project advisory committee (including agenda setting, minute taking and follow up)
- Ensure that the goals of the project are met by implementing the project work plan within timelines.
- Supervising Peer Youth Outreach Workers (volunteers) in North Halton communities
- Providing support and training to the Peer Outreach volunteers
- Presenting to community groups as required
- Networking and public relations
- Assisting with the sustainability activities (including researching funding and writing applications)
- Developing positive relationships with youth and at risk youth
- Supporting youth and at-risk/high risk youth as required (including crisis intervention, referrals, accompaniments to hospital, police, court, etc.
- Advocating for youth issues in North Halton
- Evaluating and reporting on the project as outlined in the project work plan
- Manage the administration and budget to facilitate the successful operation of the project

Qualifications:

- Training and education and/or equivalent experience in Social Work and/or related field
- Project development / management experience (including program planning, promotion and report writing)
- Experience working in harm reduction; and youth-driven peer-based projects
- Front line experience working with homeless youth, drug users, diverse and other marginalized youth populations (and must have a good understanding of these issues)
- Ability to do outreach into diverse communities
- Excellent communication and people skills
- Proficiency on a computer
- Flexible work schedule including evenings
- Car, valid drivers license and \$1,000,000 liability insurance required
- Knowledge of youth issues and services in North Halton and Halton Region an asset

POSSE Project -Volunteer Youth Peer Outreach Workers
Description of Duties

Expectations:

- All peer outreach workers must attend a minimum of 10 out of 12 training sessions before becoming an outreach worker.
- Show up for each shift on time, sober and ready to work
- Call supervisor prior to any absenteeism and arrange for shift coverage whenever possible.
- All outreach activities will be occur in a team of two youth, supervised by a minimum of one project staff and when possible one volunteer.

Outreach Duties:

1. Build trusting, non-judgmental relationships with youth in the community.
2. Distribute condoms, safe sex literature, HIV, Hep B & C, harm reduction and other resource materials or educational information as required.
3. Support youth by providing options, assisting with problem solving and making referrals to services as required.
4. Request supervisor's assistance when necessary.
5. Record statistics and contact forms at the end of each shift.
6. Maintain confidentiality as per signed confidentiality agreement.
7. Contact 911 in the event of an emergency.
8. All other duties as required.

Peer Outreach Support Services & Education Project

Participant Waiver Form

Name: _____ Home phone: _____
Cell phone: _____ Email: _____
Address: _____ Postal Code: _____
Emergency Contact: _____ Phone: _____

Instructions:

- Complete “participant information” portion. Please remember to sign this form and have a parent / guardian sign if you are under 18. Your signature(s) show your acceptance of the terms and conditions pertaining to this project.

Terms and Conditions of Participation:

- I have read the brochure “The Peer Outreach Support Services & Education Project” and understand the content and subject matter of the project will include discussions / training regarding drug use, harm reduction, sexuality, systemic oppression, anti-racism, sexism and homophobia, crisis intervention, diffusing violence, etc., with the goal of preparing me to become a peer outreach worker.
- Anything I tell project staff will be kept under a strict code of confidentiality. By law staff are required to report to the proper authorities if they believe I am being abused (and under the age of 16), or if I am a danger to others or myself.
- All participants under the age of 18 must have prior parental consent from their parent or guardian to participate.
- Ages will be restricted to youth between the ages of 15-24.
- There will be a minimum of 6 youth who will participate as a project team.
- Youth participants may or may not be on probation, and may or may not have a previous criminal record.
- Peer-youth workers are expected to arrive on time for their scheduled shifts. Missed shifts will not be paid for. This includes inclement weather, staff sickness, or any other reason a shift may be called off.
- Peer-youth workers must be flexible in their availability. Work shifts may vary in length.

- I understand I will be required to commit a minimum of a year to the P.O.S.S.E. Project from January 2007 to December 2008. (Regular meeting hours will be selected based on youth's availability).
- I understand I will receive \$10.00/hour honoraria for 3 hours a week for approximately 40 weeks (this will often be referred to as a "paid position")
- I understand I will be required to attend bi-monthly collaborative meetings in Acton and will be paid for these meetings at the same rate as above. Attending these meetings may require me to attend POSSE twice during the same week.
- Payment of honorarium of will be dependant on the amount of hours contributed to the project as approved by project staff. Payments will be made bi-weekly.
- I understand that it is my responsibility to report any honoraria received in my yearly income tax statement, Employment Insurance or Ontario Works.
- I acknowledge the Peer Outreach Support Services & Education Project is a Youth Driven project where the direction and final results of the project will be determined by the youth.
- Peer-youth workers will treat all clients, staff, placement students, volunteers, other peer-youth workers and clients with respect. Peer-youth workers will refrain from using racist, sexist or homophobic language. **TWO WARNINGS ABOUT SUCH BEHAVIOUR WILL BE GIVEN AND RECORDED BEFORE DISMISSAL.**
- **Use of threats or physical violence will result in immediate dismissal.**
- The Project Manger is my supervisor and a support person. If I have any questions about my work, ask the Project Manager. If I am having any personal problems that are interfering with my ability to work, I will let the Manager know.
- I agree to distribute referral information to all necessary services without judgment as well as distributing condoms during outreach activities.
- During POSSE Project hours Peer-youth workers will represent themselves on behalf of the agency/project in accordance with agency policy.
- By submitting this consent form, I acknowledge having read, understood, and agreed to the terms of the waiver on this form.
- I understand if I have a complaint against any staff person of POSSE and I am unable to speak with them directly. I am able to contact any member of the collaborative or Brian Warrington at The AIDS Committee of Guelph and Wellington County to lodge a complaint.

For All Applicants

I, the applicant, hereby confirm that the information herein is accurate. Furthermore, **I hereby grant to the staff of the POSSE project the right to use my photos, writings, videos and image** for promotional purposes through normal media channels, the whole without remuneration. I further understand that I may require staff to reproduce my photos or writings anonymously. **I, the applicant, will not use violence in any form at any programs at POSSE.** I understand that should I need clarification with this, I can approach staff at POSSE. **I, the applicant, also understand that the POSSE Project,** nor anyone associated with the POSSE Project is not responsible for personal injuries that may occur while I attend POSSE's programs, including while traveling in vehicles used for POSSE programs. **I also agree that POSSE is not responsible for lost or stolen property that I may bring to POSSE.**

Signature of the Applicant: _____

Parent / Guardian Waiver if youth is under 18:

In consideration of the acceptance of my application to participate in the Peer Outreach Support Services & Education Project, I, for myself, my heirs, executors, administrators, successors and assigns hereby release, waive, and forever discharge Halton Healthy Community Fund and all other associations, sanctioning bodies and sponsoring companies and their respective subsidiaries, agents, officials, servants, contractors, representatives, elected and appointed officials, successor and assigns, of and from all claims and demands, damages, loss, expenses, actions, causes of actions, whether in law or equity, in respect of death, injury, loss or damage to my person or property howsoever caused, arising or to arise by reason of my participation in the said event whether as participant or otherwise, whether prior to, during or subsequent to the event and notwithstanding that the same may have been contributed to or occasioned by the negligence of any of the aforesaid.

I further hereby undertake to hold and save harmless and agree to indemnify all to the aforesaid from and against all liability, incurred by any or all of them arising as a result of, or in any way connected with my participation in the said event. Furthermore, I hereby grant the staff of the POSSE Project the right to use photos, writings, videos and the image of the applicant for promotional purposes through normal media channels, the whole without remuneration. I further understand that the applicant may require staff to reproduce the applicants photos or writings anonymously.

As legal guardian or parent of _____ I, authorize my son/daughter to participate in the Peer Outreach Support Services & Education Project.

Parent/Guardian's Signature: _____

POSSE PROJECT
Peer Outreach Worker's
Expectations & Confidentiality Agreement

Peer-outreach workers agree to act as representatives of the agency, to be open minded, to have empathy and compassion for the experience of others no matter how different, to provide service, information and practical aide to youth, to take time to listen on the streets and in the agency.

Peer-outreach workers agree to be an example and role model to their peers, to be respectful and calm when dealing with others, to show by their actions that there are positive ways to cope, problem solve and other options to living on the streets, to resolve conflict peacefully and ask for help when needed.

Peer-outreach workers understand that they are encouraged to talk to the coordinator when things are tough and / or they are unsure of any given situation.

Peer-outreach workers understand and agree that they are not to share any personal information about any other person, other than with staff, that they learn while working as a peer-youth worker and that breaching this agreement will result in disciplinary action, including possible dismissal.

Peer-youth worker

Project Manager

Date: _____

**POSSE Operating Budget
12 Months**

Revenue	
Grants (Trillium)	68,658
Total Income	
Expenditures	
Youth Initiatives	1,833
Training	458
Administration Fees	4,583
Evaluation Fees	1,833
Personnel	54,496
Salaries and Benefits	45,329
Youth Honoraria	9,167
Materials	275
Rent	
Telephone	2,429
Travel	2,750
Total Expenditures	68,658
Net Income	0

This Budget is based on Trillium funding and does not include the following costs which have been fund-raised and/or funded through other revenue sources: rent, business phone, outreach supplies, travel costs (have increased with rising gas prices, more mileage as we've grown), office supplies, and printing.

Appendix 2

A Brief Introduction to Focus Groups

The Focus Group: A Special Kind of Group

...a focus group is a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest on a permissive, non-threatening environment. It is conducted with approximately 7 - 10 people by a skilled interviewer. The discussion is comfortable and often enjoyable for participants as they share their ideas and perceptions. Group members influence each other by responding to ideas and comments in the discussion.

Richard A. Krueger
Focus Groups, p. 6

How are Focus Groups Different from Other Small Discussion Groups?

- They are limited in size
- The purpose is NOT building consensus but getting as much diversity of opinion (where it exists) and information as possible (where it exists)
- The discussion is centred on a series of pre-determined questions with follow-up and opportunity for discussion among participants
- Notes are taken and used for analysis
- Results from a number of focus groups are brought together to identify trends in peoples' thinking

Some Suggestions for an Effective Focus Group

1. Figure out whose opinion you want and then consider the following:
 - Do you want a mixed group (ages, race and ethnicity, professionals and non-professionals, etc.) or a group that is structured along particular lines (e.g., there may be value in having professionals and non-professionals in the same group, but in some cases, you may find power imbalances between people keep some people silent)
 - Where and when can you hold the discussion

- How will you get invitations out? And how will you track who is coming and who is not?
2. Who will be the facilitator? It needs to be someone who can keep their opinions to themselves, make other people feel comfortable and know how to encourage quiet people to talk.
 3. Will you have a note-taker and/or use a tape recorder? Getting a good record of the discussion is important. How will you do this?
 4. What questions will you ask? The questions need to be worded in order to encourage open discussion. Questions which can be answered "yes" or "no" are not helpful - you need questions that invite discussion. You also need questions which will flow in a logical manner. THE DEVELOPMENT OF GOOD QUESTIONS IS REALLY IMPORTANT.
 5. Develop an opening script that is the same for all focus groups you are running.
 6. Guarantee anonymity. Here are some points which have been used by professionals when they facilitate focus groups:
 - At the start, introduce the focus group, its purpose and then go on to say something like the following:
 - Anything you say in this group will remain anonymous. In other words, while what you say may be reported publicly, the fact the YOU said it will NEVER be revealed. You will remain anonymous.
 - (when there is a really sensitive issue to be discussed, you might want to try this) I would like the group to come to an agreement that who says what stays in this room and that none of us will leave the meeting and tell other people that so-and-so said such-and-such. Can we agree to this?
 - (if you are taping) Do I have the permission of the group to tape this discussion. It is only to assist the note taker to make an accurate record of what us said during our discussion.
 7. Work hard as a facilitator to encourage everyone to speak and to dialogue with each other. Here are some other guidelines:

Before beginning...

- Arrive before you expect participants to arrive to make sure the room is set up to your satisfaction
- Greet participants as they arrive
- If you are using a tape recorder, make sure it is working and that the microphone is positioned appropriately
- Use tent cards for people to put their first names on
- Make sure the note-taker is present and able to see the tent cards

Opening the focus group...

- Introduce yourself
- Ensure people's tent cards with their names on are facing you
- Thank people for coming
- Use your script which should include purpose of focus group, the general topic, how the information will be used and the guarantee of anonymity
- Where appropriate, ask for group agreement that what is said in the room stays in the room

Facilitating discussion

- Read the question
- Give each person the opportunity to answer the question...if someone does not offer a response, identify them by name and ask what they think
- If people wish to discuss amongst themselves, this is wonderful and should be encouraged, but keep an eye on the clock so you can finish on time
- You can ask follow up questions, but normally these should be used to seek clarification or greater depth
- At no point should you offer your own opinion and you should work hard to keep your body language and facial expressions as neutral as possible...there is an important difference between being friendly and being perceived to be biased

- It is OK at any point to repeat a question
- Although you may need to keep brief notes which help you focus on the discussion, it is the note-taker's responsibility to get comprehensive notes - in other words, focus on what is being said

When completed...

- Thank people for their participation
- Remind people of the agreement to keep what was said in the room, that they will remain anonymous and how the information will be used

(Prepared by Jody Orr, The Chrysalis Group)

Appendix 3

Samples of Outreach Information Distributed and Training Materials

Youth POSSE Training Sessions - Winter 2008
Harm-Reduction and Needle Exchange

- Introductions
- Warm-up Exercise
- Harm Reduction 101
- Harm Reduction for Youth Who Choose to Use Substances

Break

- Needle Exchange - Program Goals and Services
- IV Drug Use- Harm Reduction
- Steroid Injection - Harm Reduction
- Safer Piercing

Q & A

Harm Reduction Presentation - Warm Up Exercise

- 1) What was the first drug you tried?
- 2) How old were you?
- 3) What made you want to try it?
- 4) What did you like about it - what was positive about the experience?
- 5) What didn't you like about - what was negative about the experience?
- 5) Did you ever use it again?

Harm Reduction - 101

Definition: Harm reduction is any program or policy that is designed to reduce drug-related harm, without requiring the cessation of use

Harm reductions primary focus is on people already experiencing some harm due to their substance use. Harm reduction interventions are geared to movement from more harm to less harm.

Features of Harm Reduction Programs

Pragmatic: Workers in the field tend to be realists

Harm Reduction advocates accepts that some level of drug use in society is inevitable and normal.

Harm Reduction programs seek to reduce more immediate and tangible harms rather than focusing on some vague abstract goal, such as a 'drug-free society'.

Focus: Harm reduction programs focus on the harmful effects of drug use rather than focusing on drug use per se.

Focus on the harmful effects of substance use without requiring any reduction in use.

Humanistic: The substance user's decision to use is accepted and acknowledged as his or her personal choice.

Drug users are treated as normal – rather than stigmatized as deviant.

Users are seen as active rather than passive in managing their drug use. They are therefore capable of making decisions and changes.

The drug user is viewed as a person who chooses to use drugs rather than someone who is addicted, powerless, or suffering from a 'disease'.

Neutrality: Harm reduction advocates make no moralistic judgments about drug use per se. They neither endorse nor condemn drug use. This neutrality is often perceived in the public eye as approving, condoning, or even endorsing drug use.

A position of neutrality is necessary when working from a harm reduction perspective, in order to be truly non-judgmental when working with individuals who chose to use drugs.

**Flexibility &
Maximization :**

Harm reduction programs and interventions are flexible in design.
Recognizes, accepts, and accommodates individual differences.
Provides for a maximum range of interventions.

Interventions:

Harm reduction interventions meet the client where they are currently at, in terms of their substance use, rather than requiring change as a prerequisite for service or help

Users are viewed as being experts in their lives, capable of knowing what will work or not work for them, in terms of changing their substance use.

The client's goals and priorities are always respected and helper's goals are never imposed.

In harm reduction strategies the emphasis is on immediate and realizable goals

The focus of harm reduction strategies is on any positive change rather than looking for wholesale change in all areas of a person's life.

Human Rights: Harm reduction programs recognize that HEALTH IS A BASIC HUMAN RIGHT

No individual, despite their lifestyle or the choices they make, should be deprived of this right regardless of whether they choose to use drug or not.

How does using sexist language impact violence against women?

In basic, using sexist language matters because we live in a rape culture.

A rape culture is...

A culture in which rape and other sexual violence are common

A culture “in which prevalent attitudes, norms, practices, and media condone, normalize, excuse, or encourage sexualized violence.”**

Individual sexist acts may seem harmless, but they ultimately foster disrespect for women and women’s well-being, which makes rape and abuse seem more acceptable. In this way, telling a sexist joke, using sexist language, blaming a victim of sexual assault, or displaying an objectifying poster actually contributes to a culture that allows sexual violence to occur.

Another aspect of living in a rape culture is that we tend to see reported acts of violence as individual and unconnected. In reality, sexual violence is a very large trend rooted in our cultural beliefs and practices. Being aware of this reality and knowing ways to change the culture are the first steps in ending violence against women.

- ❖ 1 in 4 college women will be the victims of sexual assault or attempted sexual assault.
- ❖ (Koss,1988)
- ❖ Among college women, 9 in 10 victims of rape and sexual assault know their offender.*
- ❖ 80-90% of acquaintance rapes involve alcohol and/or drugs.*

- ❖ Every 15 seconds a woman is beaten in our country. (FBI statistic)

- ❖ 51% of college males admit perpetrating one or more sexual assault incidents during college.(Berkowitz 1992)
- ❖ 10% of survivors of sexual assault are male.*
- ❖ 98% of the perpetrators of sexual assault are male.*

- ❖ 92% of all domestic violence crimes are committed by men against women, but men can Be victimized, and violence occurs in all forms of relationships (heterosexual, gay, lesbian).*
- ❖ LGBT people are at approximately the same risk as heterosexuals for being sexually assaulted by an acquaintance.*

* The Sexual Victimization of College Women (2000)

** http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rape_culture

Stop Using Sexist Language



What you can do:

- ⌘ Read this packet to understand sexist language and its' consequences
- ⌘ Challenge yourself to stop using sexist language
- ⌘ Educate others on the negative impact of sexist language
- ⌘ Encourage your friends, family, and colleagues to stop using sexist language

In this packet, you will find:

- ⌘ Information on why you should care about stopping sexist language
- ⌘ A close look at terms that place women in a double-bind
- ⌘ A close look at words that are used to insult men and perpetuate the idea that women are inferior
- ⌘ Comments from UCONN students on what these terms mean to them and how these terms affect their lives
- ⌘ An activity that will get you thinking about how society creates a strict mold that men and women must succumb to, or else be labeled as 'bad' and/or 'undesirable.'

Sexist Language is a problem because it sends the message that women are less than fully human. If seen as inferior, it becomes easier to treat women with less respect, disregard their rights, and ignore their well-being. Devaluing masculinity with homophobic or sexist remarks indicates that being gay or being a woman is insulting and can help perpetuate violence.

Now, let's take a closer look at those terms that perpetuate sexism and violence against women...

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“Bitch,” “Slut,” “Whore,” “Pussy,” “Fag” So What?

Think about your everyday, casual language with peers and the climate of respect (or disrespect) you create. Language can send messages that women are less than fully human. If seen as inferior, it becomes easier to treat them with less respect, disregard their rights, and ignore their well-being. Devaluing masculinity with homophobic or sexist remarks indicating that being gay or being a woman is insulting can help perpetuate violence

“It doesn’t really mean anything.” We asked some UConn undergraduates to tell us about their experiences with everyday language such as bitch, slut, whore, pussy or fag. Consider these responses:

“My friends often call me a whore/slut but not because I am one. It is just something they call me if I don’t see them. I don’t really think twice about it.”

“Unfortunately these terms are used on a daily basis, therefore, it does not have an effect on me but if someone called one of my family members or close friend mine, I would be pissed off and would take action.”

“All of these words are used around me every day. Although they are offensive, most don’t even mean anything to me anymore....These words are constantly used around me, they now are just negative words and have lost their true meaning.”

Think About This:

- Do you “choose” to not be hurt by these words, or has it become a matter of survival?
- What does it mean that we live in a culture where it is “not a big deal” if those closest to us to refer to us in the most derogatory terms? How would it feel if your loved ones (parents, etc.) referred to you as a slut, bitch, whore, fag, pussy?
- “When you find yourself choosing what the patriarchy promotes (e.g. the inferiority of women) it’s worth asking yourself if it really is a choice.” Manifesta (Baumgardner, J. (2000). *Manifesta: Young women, feminism and the future*. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux.)
- Some argue that if women use these words to refer to each other, than it can’t be sexist. However, sexism and patriarchy are systems of oppression that should not be confused with gender. Both genders can perpetuate sexism, but within patriarchy, only one gender (men) is given unearned advantage.

BITCH – THE DOUBLE BIND: In the workplace, socially, sexually and otherwise, women who state their boundaries and needs clearly risk being labeled a “bitch.” On the other hand, there also may be many costs for women in the workplace and interpersonally if they don’t present themselves assertively. Nancy Nichols of the Harvard Business Review says of women

in

the workplace, “They risk being characterized as ‘too aggressive,’ or worse, just plain ‘bitchy.’ Yet, women who act like ladies, speaking indirectly and showing concern for others, risk being seen as ‘ineffective.’” The lose/lose situation women are put in by these double binds is often one men do not face, and is a form of sexism.

Consider the experiences of these UConn students, and the double binds they have been placed in:

“A friend and I were fighting about a safe ride. I refused to go with her. She proceeded to call me a **bitch** and told me just to live my life. It made me angry.” – UConn, 2nd semester student

ASK YOURSELF: Do you have no right to assert your needs, even if that need is to not be killed in drunken car wreck?

One UConn student referring to a situation where she was responsible for crowd control at a conference for high school students stated, “A student (male) got very upset at me and said, “What a **Bitch**.” Initially it hurt, but since it was not personally directed (but directed out of anger) I let it go.” – 2nd semester student

ASK YOURSELF: How is it that this man calling her a derogatory name out of anger is not personal? What message is being sent about women’s right to occupy authority positions?

“One night at a party, I was talking to this guy, and at the end of the conversation, he says to me, “You know what? You’re a **bitch**.” This comment completely ruined my night.

ASK YOURSELF: Are these words really harmless?

WHORE/SLUT—THE DOUBLE BIND: If you refuse to succumb to the pressure to dress sexy and play to the sexual desires of men, then you are labeled a bitch. Yet, if you do dress in this manner and act in accordance with male desire, you are a whore/slut. Or perhaps more importantly, if you celebrate your own sexuality and are attuned to your own desires, you may also be labeled a slut. As Ariel Levy stated in her book *Female Chauvinist Pigs*, “The only alternative to enjoying Playboy (or flashing for *Girls Gone Wild* or getting implants or reading Jenna Jameson’s memoir) is being ‘uncomfortable’ with and ‘embarrassed’ about your sexuality.” BITCH/SLUT language leads to a lose/lose situation for all women.

Consider the ways in which these words have been used against women at UConn.

“All throughout high school I was called a **slut** for getting straight A’s. People thought that I was getting good grades by sleeping with my male teachers. This shocked me at first but once it sunk in I felt bad about myself. Ever since, I have quit trying hard in school and I avoid many social situations.” – UConn Undergraduate Student

ASK YOURSELF: How does the use of sexist language affect women’s achievement?

“My friends use the words ‘slut’ and ‘whore’ as a term of endearment. It frustrates me because there is nothing cute about those words. They are words that signify such

disrespect towards women that I can't understand why girls would use them" –2nd Semester Student

ASK YOURSELF: Whore refers to the purchasing of women's bodies for men's sexual gratification. Is this "cute" or endearing?

"I was going to visit a dorm on the other end of campus and I was running to catch the crosswalk. I made it most of the way when I was called a 'fat whore.' It seemed like an idiot thing to say but it still bothers me sometimes even months later." –2nd Semester Student

ASK YOURSELF: What long-term negative effects could your language have on the thoughts and feelings of other individuals?

PUSSY – This word is often used to refer to a man that is not acting in accordance with masculine "norms." When a man is called a PUSSY, "the implication is clear: He is weak. He is feminine. It also implies that since he is like a woman he is therefore 'less than' a man (which is also an insult to women)" (Katz 125). Consider this comment made by a UCONN Student:

"I told my friends I was taking Women's Studies classes and they called me a pussy. They were kidding so it doesn't bother me"—4th Semester Student

ASK YOURSELF: Why does learning about women's issues make you less than a man? How does the masculine standard limit men's options for any number of human activities, such as education, career choices, care-giving, relationships, seeking medical care, expressing feelings, etc.

FAG – This word is often used to make fun of a man that is perceived to be weak or sensitive. When this is the case, other men "nearly always comment about this man's sexual orientation...For substantial numbers of men, men who challenge other men's sexism are not "real men," and they are consequently quite possibly gay" (Katz 125). Furthermore, the fact that derogatory terms for homosexuality are used a synonym for weakness, undesirability, and femininity, this word perpetuates homophobic attitudes and contributes to the fear and oppression of the LBGQTQ community.

"At one point or another I have probably been called all of those words except fat. To be honest there are some situations where those words don't bother me – however fag is a word I don't tolerate. I probably should have a stronger reaction – but unless those words are directed at me – I don't seem to mind – which is something that I as a woman and a feminist, should mind. Unfortunately, the words are so common that it could get exhausting." – UConn Undergraduate Student

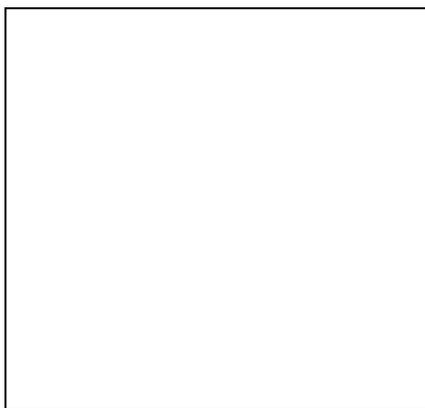
ASK YOURSELF: Should we be critical of all terms that are used to mandate us into narrow gender boxes? Words like "FAG," "BITCH," and "SLUT," all function to punish individuals who step outside gender norms and represent the linked systems of sexism and homophobia. What if everyone objected? Would the task of challenging discrimination be a little less exhausting for any one person?

An Activity to Get You Thinking...

Inside the box below, write as many words you can think of that describe a good, healthy MAN. In the space outside of the box, write all the words that describe everything a good MAN should NOT be.



Inside the box below, write as many words you can think of that describe a good, healthy WOMAN. In the space outside of the box, write all the words that describe everything a good WOMAN should NOT be.



You have just created the “Act Like a Man” and “Act like a Lady” boxes.
Now, some **questions for reflection...**

1. How are men/boys boxed in by the characteristics society deems necessary in order to be a good man?
2. Have you ever witnessed or experienced “masculine posturing” (i.e. “posing” in order to act in accordance with societal ideals) ? Has this created conflict within yourself and/or between yourself and others?
3. How are women/girls boxed in by the characteristics that society imposes upon them in order to be considered good and healthy?
4. Have you ever witnessed or experienced “feminine posturing” (i.e. “posing” in order to act in accordance with societal ideals) ? Has this created conflict within yourself and/or between yourself and others?
5. Finally, how will you challenge yourself to stop perpetuating the double-bind? In other words, how will you
6. commit to stop using sexist language?

What Are Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia?

Homophobia

The fear, hatred, or intolerance of people who identify or are perceived as lesbian or gay. Homophobia includes the fear of being seen as lesbian or gay and the fear or hatred of one's own attraction to members of the same sex (which is referred to as internalized homophobia).

Examples of Homophobia:

- Harassing or engaging in violence against individuals who are or are perceived as lesbian or gay
- Denying equal treatment to individuals who are or are perceived as lesbian or gay
- Feeling repulsed by displays of affection between same-sex couples, but accepting affectionate displays between different-sex couples
- Thinking of people who are lesbian and gay only in terms of their sexuality, rather than as whole, complex persons
- Avoiding social situations or activities where you might be perceived as lesbian or gay
- Assuming that lesbians and gay men will be attracted to everyone of the same sex

Biphobia

The fear, hatred, or intolerance of people who identify or are perceived as bisexual by heterosexuals, gay men, and lesbians, or by bisexuals themselves (internalized biphobia).

Examples of Biphobia:

- Assuming that everyone you meet is either heterosexual or lesbian/gay
- Assuming that two women together are lesbian, that two men together are gay, or that a man and a woman together are heterosexual
- Thinking that bisexuals are promiscuous or cannot live monogamously
- Assuming that bisexuals need at least one male and one female partner
- Thinking that bisexuals are attracted to everyone
- Assuming that people who identify as bisexual are "really" lesbian or gay, but are in denial
- Believing that people who are bisexual spread HIV/AIDS
- Thinking that people identify as bisexual because it is "trendy"
- Not wanting to date someone who is bisexual because you assume that the person will eventually leave you for someone of another gender

Transphobia

The fear, hatred, or intolerance of people who identify or are perceived as transgender by GLB people and heterosexuals, or by transgender people themselves (internalized transphobia).

Examples of Transphobia

- Harassing or engaging in violence against individuals who are or are perceived as transgender
- Denying equal treatment to individuals who are or are perceived as transgender
- Thinking that transsexuals are mentally ill
- Believing that transsexual men and transsexual women aren't "real" men and women
- Intentionally using inappropriate gender pronouns to refer to transgender people or calling them "it"
- Believing that crossdressing is a sexual perversion or that people who crossdress or are do so for sexual gratificati

Being an Ally: For LGBT People

Combating Homophobia and Heterosexism for LGBT Identified People

- **Understand Homophobia:** Know how homophobia exists on both a personal and institutional level. Be alert for the subtle forms of homophobia.
- **Know the history of the lesbian and gay rights movement:** Knowledge of history gives us a sense of the past, which in turn helps us create a vision and set a course for the future. It also helps to give LGBTQ individuals a sense of their place in the world.
- **Visualize a non-homophobic society:** Having a vision of a non-homophobic society can help us in bringing it about.
- **Find positive LGBTQ role models:** Free yourself of negative stereotypes and find inspiring LGBTQ individuals to use as role models.
- **Report all incidents of violence towards LGBTQ individuals:** Silence connotes acceptance. Send the message that any form of violence based on hatred is not acceptable.
- **When challenged, defend your sexual orientation or that of others:** In situations you feel comfortable doing so, challenge homophobic and heterosexist remarks.
- **Discuss homophobia with others:** Help increase their awareness about the overt or subtle messages they may be sending.
- **Respond to homophobia in movies and TV:** For many people their only experience of LGBTQ individuals is what's depicted on T.V. Help make sure that LGBTQ characters are depicted realistically by writing in to producers and networks.
- **Know your rights:** Be aware that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is illegal.
- **Attend demonstrations:** Share your voice and your support.
- **Write a letter to the editor:** Express your views on issues by submitting an editorial.
- **Sign petitions and organize petition drives:** Lend your support to others who are working to end homophobia, or take action yourself.
- **Join LGBTQ political organizations:** Becoming involved can be a very empowering experience.
- **Support corporations with progressive attitudes towards LGBTQ individuals:** Let them know that their efforts are appreciated. More companies will likely follow suit.
- **Know the facts, distinguish between myth and reality:** Don't perpetuate the myths, and know how to dispel them for others.
- **Free yourself from LGBTQ stereotypes:** Live your LGBTQ life the way you want to. Stereotypes-are boxes and you don't need to fill them.
- **Accept diversity in the LGBTQ community:** There are enough limits out there without us adding our own.
- **Ask librarians to stock LGBTQ books:** Don't be afraid to ask for resources.
- **Participate in Pride week events:** For most LGBTQ individuals it is an exhilarating experience that augments their sense of pride.
- **Be visible, don't be afraid to display the symbols:** Symbols help generate visibility and represent unity.

Adapted from: Una Fahy (1995) (LGBTQ = Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning)

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered Community Safety Initiative
Antigonish Women's Association
Suite 206A Kirk Place, 219 Main Street, B2G 2C1
(902) 863-2347 lgbtproject@ns.sympatico.ca

10 Things You Need to Know About HIV/AIDS

1. The AIDS pandemic has left no continent untouched. As of December 1996, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) estimated that 22.6 million men, women and children worldwide were living with HIV/AIDS and over 6.4 million people had already died as a result of the infection. In Canada, more than 20,000 AIDS cases have been reported as of April 1997, and at least 50,000 Canadians have contracted the virus. Each year, as many as 5000 more people are infected. Over half of these are younger than 25.
2. AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) results from the late stage of infection with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus). In some adults, AIDS can take more than 10 years to develop. Thus, a person infected with HIV may look and feel healthy for many years, but he or she can still transmit the virus to someone else, which is why it is very important for individuals to get tested.
3. HIV is found in the following types of fluid:
 - semen (and pre-ejaculate fluid)
 - vaginal secretion
 - blood
 - breast milk
4. HIV does not survive long outside the body, and therefore can only be transmitted when certain types of body fluid (see above) of an infected individual enters an uninfected individual. Examples include:
 - having unprotected sex (vaginal, anal or oral) with someone infected with HIV
 - sharing needles to inject drugs including steroids, or for body piercing or tattooing, with someone infected with HIV (HIV-infected blood is passed directly into your blood from needles or syringes)
 - from an infected mother to her child during pregnancy or delivery, or in infancy through breastfeeding
5. Sexual transmission of HIV can be prevented. Sexual intercourse, whether heterosexual or homosexual, is the major route of transmission of HIV.

You can prevent the sexual transmission of the virus by:

- abstaining from sexual intercourse (this is the only 100% safe and effective way to avoid the risk of becoming infected with HIV.)
- practising mutual monogamy (having sex with only one partner who has sex only with you) with an uninfected partner

You can significantly reduce the risk of spreading HIV through sexual intercourse by:

- using latex condoms correctly from start to finish with each act of vaginal or anal intercourse
- using a condom cut open, dental dam, or household non-microwavable plastic wrap while performing each act of oral sex on a woman
- using a latex condom correctly from start to finish while performing each act of oral sex on a man
- engaging in safer sex practices — that involve no penetration — such as dry kissing, massaging, hugging, touching, body-rubbing, and masturbation

10 Things You Need to Know About HIV/AIDS

fact sheet ... continued

6. Infection through blood can be stopped. Blood for transfusion can be tested for HIV infection and discarded if contaminated. Needles, syringes, and other skin-piercing instruments should be sterilized or discarded after each use and should never be shared. When a person uses these instruments, some of the individual's blood remains, and if other people use the same instrument, they could be shooting HIV directly into their bloodstream.
7. You do not get HIV from:
 - donating blood
 - mosquito bites and other bug bites
 - sharing cups and utensils
 - sneezes or coughs
 - hugging, touching, or dry kissing a person with HIV
 - sharing telephones, computers or coffee pots
 - going to any public place with HIV infected people (pools, movies, etc.)
 - drinking fountains or toilet seats
8. Discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS — or those thought to be at risk of infection — violates individual human rights and endangers public health. It gives people outside the stigmatized group a sense that the threat of infection, and thus the need for personal precautions, has been removed. It also drives the AIDS problem underground, making all efforts at prevention and care much more difficult.
9. AIDS affects EVERYONE — EDUCATE YOURSELF AND OTHERS. Every day, according to UNAIDS, over 8,500 people worldwide are newly infected with HIV. Be aware of the trends of the disease and the behaviors that could put you at risk. HIV/AIDS affects people of all geographic locations, ages, races, ethnicities, social classes and sexual orientations. Education is crucial in both helping to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and ensuring compassion for those affected by and infected with HIV/AIDS.
10. YOU can help stop the spread of HIV/AIDS! Get involved in community efforts. AIDS Awareness Week (23 November to 30 November 1998) and World AIDS Day (December 1) are special opportunities every year to focus attention on this urgent challenge that affects us all.

(Adapted from One World. One Hope. : resource booklet, American Association for World Health, 1996.)

The Canadian
AIDS Society's

**NATIONAL
AIDS
AWARENESS
CAMPAIGN**

OR MORE INFORMATION:

**The Faces of
HIV/AIDS**

Distributed by:

Halton Regional Health Department
AIDS/STD/Sexual Health Clinic Services
Lakeside Shopping Village
5353 Lakeshore Road, Unit 2
Burlington, ON L7L 1C8

Phone: (905) 825-6065
(905) 878-8113 Ext. 4548 (from G'town)
(519) 853-0501 Ext. 4548 (from Acton)
(905) 639-4540 Ext. 4548 (from Aldershot)
(905) 333-1096 (TTY)

Pamphlets Used by POSSE



Exchange Works Needle Exchange Program

Steroid Use - Reducing Your Risk

**All services are free and
confidential**



Exchange Works Needle Exchange Program

IV Drug Use - Reducing Your Risk

**All services are free and
confidential**



APPENDIX 4

POSSE Forms

Peer Outreach Worker Confidentiality Form

Outreach Contact Form

(completed after each contact or shift)

Safe Drug Information Kit

Record Form

(completed after each contact or shift whenever Kit
Contents have been distributed)

Outreach Contact Statistical Report

POSSE PROJECT

Peer Outreach Worker's
Expectations & Confidentiality Agreement

Peer-outreach workers agree to act as representatives of the agency, to be open minded, to have empathy and compassion for the experience of others no matter how different, to provide service, information and practical aide to youth, to take time to listen on the streets and in the agency.

Peer-outreach workers agree to be an example and role model to their peers, to be respectful and calm when dealing with others, to show by their actions that there are positive ways to cope, problem solve and other options to living on the streets, to resolve conflict peacefully and ask for help when needed.

Peer-outreach workers understand that they are encouraged to talk to the coordinator when things are tough and / or they are unsure of any given situation.

Peer-outreach workers understand and agree that they are not to share any personal information about any other person, other than with staff, that they learn while working as a peer-youth worker and that breaching this agreement will result in disciplinary action, including possible dismissal.

Peer-youth worker

Project Manager

Date: _____

The Peer Outreach Support Services & Education Project
Client Contact / Unusual Occurrence Form

Date: ___/___/___ Time: ___/___/___ Worker's Initials: ___ Location: _____
M D Y Hr. Min. am/pm

Clients First Name or Nickname: _____

Contact: New: ___ Repeat: ___ Female: ___ Male: ___ Age: ___

Client Demographics: DO NOT ASK (Document ONLY IF REVEALED)

Drug use: Alcohol Use Pot Use Cocaine Use Ecstasy Use Crystal Meth

Crack Use Mushrooms Heroin or Other Opiate Tobacco Other Drug(s) specify: _____

Unstable Home: Unstable Living Details _____ No/little + connection with Family:

Previous criminal record:

Sexually active: Pregnant Needs contraception Not practicing safe sex Sexual orientation

Possible STD Other Sexual Issue specify: _____

Mental illness: - Diagnosed Undiagnosed Mental Disability: - Diagnosed Undiagnosed

Physical Disability: Learning Disability:

Victim of a crime: Sexual assault Physical assault Childhood sexual abuse Childhood Abuse

Other Victim specify: _____

Attending school: Has grade 12: Less than grade 12: Post Secondary:

Working: Trouble holding onto a job: Needs work skills/ experience:

Not connecting with community services:

Written Information Given Out:

POSSE project: STD/sexual health: Safe sex: STD: ECP: Drug info: ADAPT:

Needle exchange: Safer injection: Safer steroid: Bridging the gap: Lighthouse shelter:

Reality Check (prevention): Reality Check (Health and safety): Halton child & Youth services:

AIDS committee: CLEO specify: _____ Other written info specify: _____

Safe drug information Kit: Crack: _____ Coke: _____ Piercing: _____ IV: _____ Crystal Meth: _____ POT: _____

(answer as: Y or N. If yes, include safer drug information kit form - indicating a REPEAT client contact)

Safe Drug Information Kit Record Form

New contact: Repeat:: Total:

Female: Male:

Age:

15-16: 17-18: 19-20:

21-24: 24+:

Drug use:

Alcohol: Pot: Cocaine: Ecstasy: Crystal Meth:

Crack: Mushroom: Heroin: Tobacco:

Safer Drug Information Kit distributed:

Crack: (glass stem) Coke: Crystal Meth:

Marijuana: Piercing: 18.5 16.5 14.5

Total:

Needle Exchange supplies distributed:

IV starter kit: Needle: Tie up: Water: Matches:

Alcohol Swab: Cotton Swab: Ascorbic Acid:

Sharp Container:

Drug Kit content and written information distributed:

Condoms: Lube: NEP Card: HEP C info:

Drug Card: Gum: Rolling paper: Harm reduction info:

SHC card: Pair of Gloves: Piercing After care info:

POSSE Info: AIDS Info:

This report also include Drug kits distributed by POSSE Project Outreach team through other source of funding then Drug Strategy Community Initiative Fund.

