

Checklist: Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health Clubs

Comprehensive youth sexual and reproductive health (YSRH) programming supports young and adolescent men and women in gathering information, learning skills, and practicing behaviors around topics appropriate for their developmental stages, including gender norms, decision-making, goal setting, healthy relationships, HIV and STI prevention, and pregnancy prevention. YSRH camps or clubs should be implemented through a lens of positive youth development, including allowing youth to take a leadership role under the guidance of a skilled mentor as well as creating a participatory and safe space. They should integrate strategic and authentic parent and community engagement throughout both planning and implementation, including providing linkages to youth-friendly resources and services.

For more on founding and organizing a club, see “Checklist: Assessing Clubs.”

Italics indicate a required reporting quality standard.

Who should your program focus on?

- Think strategically about who you bring into your program.
 - Be careful and deliberate about the youth you choose to participate in your program. Choose the population that will truly benefit from the intervention, and think about groups that may be hidden or forgotten (i.e.: in-school youth, out-of-school youth, etc.)
 - Be conscious and creative in the ways that you find your participants. Using youth leaders for outreach is a great strategy.
 - Know your population of youth.
 - Do some kind of needs assessment with the group you plan on working with using PACA tools and boot camp tools.
 - Engage other community members with influence on youth.
 - Bring in other positive adult influences in youth lives (see the Peace Corps 40 Assets for Youth materials), including parents, teachers, clinic staff, or community leaders.
 - *Engage capable and motivated male and/or female adults (teachers and/or service providers) in providing accurate information and/or services related to one or more of the following YSRH topics: relationships, values, attitudes and skills, gender norms and gender-based violence, human development, sexual behavior, and sexual and reproductive health.*
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- Choose good counterparts, who should be:
 - Young enough to relate to, but old enough to be good leaders.
 - Male and female. Youth will feel more comfortable and willing to open up to someone of the same sex, especially about certain topics.
 - From the local community. This shows youth that it is possible for people from their own area and background to be good leaders and to make a difference.
 - Motivated and truly love what they are doing.
 - Trained in some way, particularly on YSRH content or life skills for healthy decision-making.

Where and when should your program take place?

- Use a practical space.
 - Use a meeting location that youth will actually be able to reach easily. Come to them instead of making them come to you.
 - Make sure the location is private and one where they will feel comfortable.
 - Choose a meeting time that is practical for youth (i.e.: not during school or work hours, not during chores and meal prep time, etc.).
 - Give youth ownership of their space.
 - In order to make the space feel safe and comfortable, give participants complete ownership of it. Ask them how they want to arrange the chairs, and perhaps bring a sign for your club that you can hang up for each meeting.
 - Consider physical safety.
 - Make sure your meeting space is in an area where youth feel safe, and that they are able to travel to and from safely. Keep travel safety in mind when choosing a time to meet.
 - Consider emotional safety.
 - Create a space that is emotionally safe and freeing for youth. Make it clear that they can speak freely, and that no one will share anything they say with people outside of the space. Build trust through conversation and activities, such as the ones in the Peace Corps Life Skills Manual (p.12).
 - Create a support network.
 - Remember, the “safe space” you are creating is something that goes beyond the walls of your meeting room. What you really want is to create is a network of trusted friends and mentors that youth can rely on and turn to when they need support.
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How should you reach youth with your program?

- Plan to cover YSRH topics and lessons during at least 12 sessions of your year-long club.
 - While not every session of your club needs to be focused on YSRH, try to plan out a series of 12-20 short lessons on different topics and skills related to sexual and reproductive health. This will prepare youth to make healthy choices, as well as give them a chance to ask questions and begin to feel comfortable with the topics.
 - Programming should cover a comprehensive set of topics related to YSRH, as well as critical life skills for girls and boys, women and men, to be able to successfully promote positive sexual and reproductive health outcomes.
 - Topics should include reproductive anatomy and physiology, sex and sexuality, sexually transmitted infections, HIV and AIDS, early pregnancy, condoms and contraception, puberty, risk behavior, delayed sex and abstinence, as well as communication, healthy relationships, decision making, goal setting, dealing with stress and emotions, leadership, self-esteem and self-confidence, and the role of gender norms and expectations in their lives.
 - Group your participants meaningfully.
 - Be careful about how you create groups since participants may feel more free to share and open up in a small group. Group participants around the same age, and you may want to separate boys from girls.
 - Involve the surrounding community.
 - Reach out to parents, teachers, clinic staff, community leaders, and other important populations. Hold a parents meeting with your counterpart to explain the program you'll be teaching with your youth group or host a gathering of school and clinic staff together to facilitate collaboration and plan some joint activities in support of YSRH programming.
 - *Engage parents in order to help them build their capacity to address the physical and behavioral aspects of human sexuality with their children.*
 - Use peer education and cascading leadership.
 - Once one group of adolescents completes a full set of lessons, they can then be trained and used as educators for the next group.
 - Peer education **MUST ALWAYS** be supervised by mentors; otherwise there is major risk for misunderstandings and misinformation.
 - Use age-appropriate content and activities.
 - Take the time to make sure your lessons are age-appropriate. Consider what the participants may already know, what kinds of changes they are going through, and the decisions they are being faced with, and use the information you gathered from your needs assessment.
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- *Introduce youth to sexual and reproductive health topics in age- and sex-appropriate ways that consider what participants may already know, what kinds of developmental and emotional changes they are going through, and the decisions they are likely to be facing.*
- Be repetitive.
 - Always repeat your main messages at least five times during your lesson, and make sure the students say it out loud as well.
 - Revisit these main messages as you move ahead with new lessons. If you feel like you are saying things far too many times, that should be just about perfect for the students. Repetition, repetition, repetition.
 - *Engage the same group of youth consistently over time.*
- Use participatory teaching methods.
 - Show things and do things during the lessons, and engage the students themselves in showing and doing things. Your lessons should be very interactive.
 - Even when you are sharing information, ask a lot of questions and get the students involved in any way possible.
 - Each lesson should begin with a warm-up activity and should include AT LEAST one other activity that is related to the lesson.
 - *Use interactive, participatory teaching methods to involve youth and to help them to internalize and integrate information.*

What should you do to reach them?

- Make each lesson goal-focused.
 - Make sure there are goals and objectives for each lesson you teach and keep these at the front of your mind while you are teaching.
 - Assess your success in reaching your objectives as you are teaching. If they are not being met, adjust your lesson.
 - Provide scientifically accurate information and applicable statistics.
 - Always provide your students with interesting and accurate information.
 - If you do not know something, use your bootcamp and post resources, or ask someone else who is knowledgeable and reliable.
 - Make sure there is plenty of time for questions during any training you do with mentors and other adults.
 - Present clear, consistent, and repetitive messages.
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- Make sure the information you teach is simple, understandable, and always consistent.
 - Remember, repetition, repetition, repetition.
 - Focus on specific behaviors.
 - Give specific examples of behaviors, strategies for prevention, and situations in which these may be tested. The more relatable and realistic examples you use, the better.
 - *Promote youth skill-building in interpersonal relationships, including decision-making, assertiveness, communication, negotiation, and refusal.*
 - Practice behaviors and strategies.
 - Whenever possible, students should practice positive behaviors by considering some of the difficult situations they will encounter and participating in skits and role plays.
 - Include abstinence education as well as education about safe sex.
 - Explain and emphasize the benefits of delaying sex. But also go beyond abstinence education and provide youth with the information they need about condoms and contraceptives and all of their local options.
 - Provide linkages.
 - Provide youth with information about their options, and link them with services that can provide ALL of these resources.
 - Discuss problems related to societal and familial values.
 - Make students aware of some of the challenges they may face when applying what they have learned in relation to social or family values. Participants should reflect upon and carefully discuss how their sexual education coincides or clashes with their personal values and the values of their communities.
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