

Involving Your Community

A. Key Stakeholders

While it is likely that your program will be based within a school, any program for youth can benefit from ongoing partnerships with your community. Your community is a fountain of potential resources for your program. An important first step in engaging your community is to identify key stakeholders.

Identifying Stakeholders

It is likely that a variety of organizations will be interested in your program. These can include (but are not limited to):

- Organizations serving youth and their families
- Health-based organizations (such as your local health department)
- Local residents
- Faith-based groups
- Local businesses
- Cultural groups
- Volunteer or special interest groups

Each of these groups will provide a unique set of services and resources. Each group will also have individual interests. When approaching stakeholders, you should consider the following:

- What are this organization's main interests?
- Who is in charge? Who is this organization composed of?
- How will my program impact this organization?
- What can this organization do for my program?

Once you have answered these questions, you can then begin to move into the partnership phase of this process.

B. Partnerships/Assets

Working with teens is a community engagement process. While your focus will largely be on the teens in your classroom, parents/guardians, local residents, businesses, and community organizations all have a stake in adolescent sexual health. This conversation must be an ongoing one. In order to accomplish this, you will need community partners. These partners will help you get your message out to the community at large.

A partner's level of involvement will be based on what their organization has to offer. Each organization is going to have a unique variety of opportunities for community engagement. These might include:

- A physical space for trainings
- Guest lecturers
- Educational materials
- Incentives for students
- Media space/coverage
- Fundraising

And so much more. For instance, if you decide to partner with a local crisis pregnancy center, this organization may be able to provide you with a guest lecturer who is well informed on issues of teen pregnancy. A local newspaper could run an article about tips to keep teens safe. A local faith organization could offer up physical space to hold an adolescent health meeting for parents and guardians. The possibilities are limitless. It is important that the entire community be united in wanting to keep teens healthy and safe!