

How to engage youth in a meaningful way

SRSLY Coalition



27TH ANNUAL NATIONAL LEADERSHIP FORUM
ENGINEERING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Presenters

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Who is SRSLY?

- Substance abuse prevention coalition with community involvement focus and priority of being youth led.
- Founded in Chelsea, MI in 2008 . Later replicated in Dexter & Stockbridge in 2013. Manchester, MI adopted SRSLY model in 2015.
- We're suburban/rural communities in SE Michigan. Towns with one high school.
- Focus on fun and emphasize the positive
- ASC & YSC
- Average of 126 youth participating each year



You will learn...

- How to attract youth to your coalition
- How to keep youth in your coalition
- What to do with them once they're there



What makes engaging youth hard?

- Take five minutes at your table to create a list of things that may make engaging youth hard in your coalition.
- We'll spend five minutes sharing what we came up with together.



HOW TO ATTRACT YOUTH TO YOUR COALITION

- Recruitment Ideas
- Fun!
- Don't take yourselves too SRSLY



Recruitment Ideas

- Create different activities to attract different kids
 - Open Houses
 - SRSLY Week
 - CPTN SRSLY comic book series
 - Leadership classes and school groups who need volunteer hours (Project Sticker Shock)
 - Minecraft Server Build
 - SRSLY Internship
 - YES Program
 - Bring a friend



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Bring a friend works!



Let's Play a Game

- Group counting
 - Let's try to count to 10 as a group
 - Only one person can say a number at a time.
 - If two or more people talk at the same time, start over.



Fun

- Ask youth you know what they think is fun
 - Youth trends change, they can tell you
- Make fun a priority on the agenda- ex. start the meeting with games and encourage adults to play
- Lunch visits with games
- Anti-Drug Contest- PB&J with feet
- Fun outings & YSC Retreats



Don't take yourself too SRSLY

- Allow them to plan the flow of meetings
 - Not too much heavy business, include breaks
- Laugh at their corny jokes
- Be ready to laugh at yourself too
- Food, when possible



HOW TO KEEP YOUTH IN YOUR COALITION

- Relationship Building
- Emphasize the positive
- Great Communication
- Recognize and share member's accomplishments



Relationship Building

- Get to know the students and what is important to them
- Show up to support them at events outside of the coalition when possible
- Make gratitude a part of interactions- “I’m so glad you were able to be here”
- Get to know their parents as well



Emphasize the Positive

- Avoid creating "us" vs. "them" or defining youth who use as "bad kids," because you're talking about their friends or siblings.
- Reinforce their decision to not use and remind them they are part of the majority (social norming and Safe Homes)



Emphasize the Positive

- Stay away from scared straight techniques, instead positive presence (SRSLY swag)



Communication

- Use multiple modes of communication and copy parents on all electronic send outs
 - Email, text, phone calls, social media
- Social media
 - Ask students which modes they use the most
 - Facebook is for adults
 - Instagram and Snapchat
 - SRSLY App
- SRSLY calendar on website



Recognition

- Freebies: Free milkshakes at lunch or ice cream at kick off games to students with membership cards
- CTZN of the Month
- Volunteer Appreciation Party
- SRSLY Comic Book characters
- YSC Scholarships
- YSC Retreat
- Picture Books for graduating YSC members
- Allow students opportunities to present in front of community groups and nationally- they get to be the face of SRSLY
- Write press releases and blog posts about what they're doing in the coalition



WHAT TO DO ONCE YOU HAVE THEM THERE

- Ask them what they want
- Create coalition structure that supports them
- Youth invited to participate in all areas of Strategic Prevention Framework
- Opportunities to represent our coalition



What do youth want?

- Ask us, why do kids in our community use drugs and alcohol? If you had an unlimited budget, what would you do about it?
 - You don't have to do everything that they come up with. It does mean that you have a conversation about it.
 - Examples: defining membership requirements and meeting attendance



Coalition Structure

- Youth Steering Committee
 - Open to students in 5-12 grade. Meets monthly or biweekly. Plans many of SRSLY activities
- Youth drives implementation
 - Duct tape fashion show, SRSLY cinema, Minecraft server, dodgeball, 3x3 basketball, GaGa Ball, and Magic: The Gathering tournaments
- We set dates/times/locations for meetings
- Train youth on local data and logic model
- Train youth on public speaking



Invited to Participate in all of SPF

- Task forces
 - Strategic planning, data collection, evaluation, event planning
 - Although task forces are led by adults there is at least one youth member present



Opportunities to represent our coalition

- Presentations to community groups
 - School board, Rotary, city council, town halls, local wellness foundation, other funders, etc.
- Presentations at conferences (county-wide, state and national events)



Resources

- Sample agendas
 - YSC meeting, leadership retreat
 - List of games for youth at meetings or events
 - Sample of promo materials to attract youth



REFLECTION

- Take another look at the challenges that you listed in the beginning.
- Brainstorm ways that you can overcome them



Ask yourself

“Is this *your* coalition that youth get to attend, or is it theirs?”



Thank you!

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