Sex in the CBO: Community Based Organizations as Avenues for Addressing Sexual Health

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U.S. adolescent sexual health remains suboptimal. Research suggests community-based organizations (CBOs) and youth development professionals (YDP) represent an important and willing channel for addressing this problem but they frequently lack the education and support resources to do so effectively.

Objective: To develop and evaluate web-deliverable resources for supporting CBO-based YDP to address sexual health related issues within their organizations.

Background

Disproportionately high rates of sexually transmitted infection and unplanned pregnancy among adolescents suggest the continuing need for evidence-based sexuality education. Community-based organizations (CBOs) and their youth development professionals (YDP) have significant potential to promote adolescent sexual health; however, recent research indicates CBOs and YDP, despite willingness, are unprepared to do so, with lack of education and support resources being a particular barrier. Our goal is to develop theory-based learning and performance support tools to increase awareness, understanding, and skills among youth development workers regarding the roles they are able to play in the sexual health of the young people with who them work.

Methods

Implemented iterative, user-centered development processes, coupled with behavior change theory and extensive input from YDP and sexual health experts, to develop a CBO-targeted sexual health portal, mightyresource.org. Conducted a repeated-measures, mixed-methods, field trial examining stage-of-change, knowledge, beliefs, intentions, self-efficacy, and other factors affecting engagement in key sexual health roles.

Development Results

First, we had to make things since no resources existed for YDP to better address sexual health in their CBOs.

Resources include case studies, modeling, video, animation, and interactive self-assessment. The pilot intervention is located at mightyresource.org and involved 3 primary deliverables: (1) Video Case Studies, with analysis and reflection activities; (2) KwikZips, three animated learning modules with self-assessment; and (3) the site itself, with management tools and a collection of resources for the YDPs.

Case Studies

One of the best ways people learn is through watching other people, especially more advanced peers, engage in activities similar to what we would like the learners to do. The efficacy of this approach is well-established and is traceable at least as far back as Bandura. And, its not just learning… yes, people can understand a behavior by seeing it in action and, yes, they can often then mimic the behavior, but it is also true that people are more likely to actually do the behavior if they see it performed by others. Its not just about learning, its about being more willing to do.

As a result, we chose to create a series of case studies around sexual health related topics. 3 examples of the cases are:

Asia. Worried about Pregnancy.

Asia, a 16 year old who has been attending your organization for some time, comes to your office and asks if she could talk to you. She seems very distressed and explains that she had unprotected sex with her relatively new boyfriend and now she believes she is pregnant. What would you do?

Felix. Possible self-harm and sexual identity.

Felix Menendez is a 15 year male in your after school-program. You noticed unusual bruising around Felix's neck when he was playing volleyball with other kids at your organization today. You have known Felix for some time, though you do not have a strong personal bond with him yet. What would you do?

Tonya. Sexting.

A ping makes you aware of a student's cell phone. There's a no cell phone ground rule during program time so you walk over to take it. When you look at the screen, the txt says "Yo T! Send xxx px!?" You know Tonya, she's a 16 year old in your program. What would you do?

The cases include The Situation (the actual case), Reflections (critiques of the situation by the YDP, the youth, and two experts), Reviews (simple reviews of the case, for broader public feedback), and What Do You Think? (a structured analytical framework to assist the participant to examine key aspects of the interaction—as driven by the performance objectives of the project).

KwikZips

In addition to cases studies with expert and participant reflections, we also created three 8-10 minute animated learning modules. These modules, called KwikZips: The Late Night Edition. Sexuality Education…Fast! introduce YDP specific sexual health topics in short, fun, engaging, segments.

Sex in the CBO. What Will You Do?

This episode is all about sex. Sexual health that is, and a holistic view of sexual health as a matter of fact. What's that mean? How is it relevant to a community based organization? Watch and find out!

You're Already Doing It… So Why Not Do It Better!

This episode is all about you and the ways you are already doing sex in your CBO. Yes, you! What does that mean? Surely not. Surely, yes, and don't call me Shirley! Galena has the 411. Watch and learn how you are always already doing sexual health in your organization.

What Roles Will You Play?

You know sexual health, you know you are already doing it, so what's the big picture in your organization, how can you improve sexual health in your CBO? Galena's got the top 7 roles. Which one's do you know about, which will you do? Check them out…

On the MightyResource site, each KZ also has a brief interactive self-assessment that examines factors that may influence adoption and performance, including beliefs "How important do you think sexual health is to your organization's mission?" and awareness, e.g. "Youth face sexual health related issues every day. List as many sexual health issues as you can that you think youth in your organization encounter."

Other Resources

Do you understand the big picture of sexual health, do you think of sexual relationships from a big picture perspective, from womb to tomb, relationships to intercourse? Are you willing and ready to improve sexual health in your organization? This self-assessment helps the YDP determine just where they stand. We also included new resources, including a set of frequently asked questions that we encountered in the initial research or that our subject matter experts and CBO/YDP partners identified as common issues.

MightyResource.org

A database-driven, content-management system based interactive site with user management functions, mightyresource.org, was developed. Branding, theming, design and implementation occurred iteratively with SME and target audience input at all stages. The site was designed to be simple to use and to capitalize on a responsive framework, one that would scale from mobile to desktop while maintaining usability across phone, tablet, and desktop. The site is primarily divided into Learn (KZ learning modules), Explore (Cases), and Do (Resources).

Evaluation Results

Participants found the site useful and usable, and highly recommended it to colleagues. Significant growth was observed on several core study variables, including role awareness, intentions/willingness to engage in roles, and confidence to do so. Participants noted many areas of need for additional tools and resources and suggested changes to the current resources.

Usability Items from MightyResource Field Trial

ITEMS	MEAN	SD	Sig.?
MightyResource.org helped me consider new ways to address sexual health in my organization.	3.62	0.49	*
MightyResource improved my understanding of holistic sexual health.	3.56	0.51	*
I feel better prepared to recognize signs of sexual health related questions or concerns affecting youth.	3.67	0.48	*
I feel better prepared to address sexual health related questions or concerns youth may bring to me.	3.51	0.49	*
I felt the video cases were realistic.	3.90	0.35	*
I will use information the MightyResource in my work.	3.85	0.44	*
I will return to review mightyresource.org in the future.	3.90	0.44	*
I would recommend MightyResource.org to my colleagues.	3.90	0.44	*

* Indicates the mean, on scale of 1-4, is statistically significantly different from the test value of 3.0, p<0.05.
A mean > 3.0 indicates the participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

Perceived Usefulness of Potential Phase 2 Resources

ITEMS	MEAN	SD	Sig.?
More video cases of YDP interacting with youth	4.68	0.48	*
An organization adoption kit, with a readiness checklist and resources, to make systematic implementation easier	4.63	0.49	*
Lessons on sexual health related bullying/stigmatization	4.19	0.79	*
Lessons on sexual orientation/identity awareness	4.53	0.51	*
Lessons on supporting relationship/social aspects of sexual health	4.74	0.44	*
Lessons on clinical aspects of sexual health (e.g. sex, STD, pregnancy, birth control)	3.84	1.06	
Lessons focused on implementing organizational policies	4.63	0.49	*
Lessons on group-based conducting sexual health education activities	4.38	0.72	*
Forums for seeking help from peers and experts related to holistic sexual health in community based organizations	4.31	0.56	*
Media rich lessons, such as short animated informational videos.	3.70	1.02	
Interactive cases for practicing interacting with youth on sexual health related concerns	4.44	0.51	*
Customizable resources (handouts, animations, weblinks) to have on hand to give to youth, that address various sexual health issues.	4.56	0.88	*
Customizable resources to make conducting activities easier, such as small group workshop plans, and pamphlets.	4.63	0.49	*

* Indicates the mean, on scale of 1-5, is statistically significantly different from the test value of 3.5, p<0.05.
A mean > 3.5 indicates the Extremely or Very Useful.

Usability, Utility, and Satisfaction

Usability was high (see table). Additionally, the participants, on 5 pt scales (Strongly Disagree…Strongly Agree) felt the design was engaging (4.00, 0.65), easy to navigate (4.31, 0.71), and well-organized (4.49, 0.51); professional (4.67, 0.48), accurate (4.64, 0.49), and credible (4.87, 0.35); and they thought it was fun (4.09, 0.56).

Knowledge

To obtain a measure of knowledge regarding sexual health, 12 items were developed by the core content team. The items covered basic definitions and categories of sexual health, types of communication, common interaction problems (such as closed body language and statements that 'close the door' to ongoing discussion). Correct answers to all items are mentioned in the prototype learning modules or embedded in the case study resources, although they were often not highlighted.

Total number of correct answers was used as an index of knowledge. A matched pair T-test ($\alpha=0.05$) was used to compare the number of items correct before and after structured MightyResource use. There was a significant within group change in the knowledge index indicating that learned key information from the materials. The change averaged a 32% increase in score, or 2.4 items out of the 12. This is a strong result, especially considering the short nature of the pilot.

Impact on Likely Behavioral Adoption

ITEMS	MEAN	SD	Sig.?
Adopt a holistic approach to addressing sexual health within your organization	4.28	0.53	*
Help a youth who approaches you with a sexual health related concern	4.38	0.56	*
Recognize diverse sexual health related situations that may arise in my organization	4.18	0.71	*
Connect a youth with another service provider (e.g. mental health, clinical care) in the community	4.36	0.55	*
Provide youth with sexual health related resources (e.g. brochures, websites)	4.23	0.74	*
Encourage a youth to talk with their parents about a sexual health issue	4.21	0.54	*
Conduct group sexual health education sessions./trainings for youth in your organization	3.79	0.98	
Assist in reviewing or developing sexual health related policies and procedures in your organization	3.69	0.87	

* Indicates the mean, on scale of 1-5, is statistically significantly different from the test value of 3.5, p<0.05.
A mean > 3.5 indicates the participants were Somewhat or A Lot More Likely to do so.

Perceived Impact on Key Support Behaviors

Participants were asked whether their experience with the pilot materials would make it more or less likely that they would adopt, or if they were already doing them, continue to engage in key valued sexual health support behaviors within their organization. As shown in the table below, the participants indicated that using MightyResource increased the likelihood they would engage in each of the valued outcomes.

Overall

When asked if there was anything else they would like to comment on or share about their experience with the site, comments included "I believe that children are becoming sexual active at earlier ages. Maybe there could be information for late [elementary] school children." "I can't wait until you roll this out so I can share with others." "Great job! Please let me know how I can spread world about this fantastic resource." "This is impressive work and SOOOOO VERY NEEDED! Thank you!" "Nope, nothing to say, very nice and should be very helpful to CBOs. Loved the approach, cases, and lessons." Finally, participating YDP were asked to indicated how they would rate the pilot resources overall, and more than 8 of 10 (81.82%), said MightyResource was Excellent on a 4 point scale from Poor to Excellent (M=3.82, SD=0.126).

Conclusion

CBO-based YDP are well-situated to address sexual health issues among many underserved adolescents. mightyresource.org expanded their definition of sexual health, increased their awareness and willingness to engage in different sexual health related roles, and improved their confidence to do so. Project resources will be shared and implications for future efforts discussed.

Resources described are freely available at **mightyresource.org**