



RECOVERY & PREVENTION
RESOURCES
 of Delaware and Morrow Counties

Natural Helpers

Natural Helpers: A Peer Helping Peer Program

The Natural Helpers program is a peer helping program based on the premise that students go to their friends for help and advice with problems. This program is designed to increase helping skills of youth who are identified as the "helpers" by their peers. Through the Natural Helpers program, "peer helpers" increase their problem solving, helping, and referral skills by completing a two-day training retreat. After the training, the Natural Helpers apply their skills when helping their friends with problems through existing informal peer helping networks in their schools. The training also strengthens peer helpers' ability to identify and refer students to adults or professionals for help in appropriate problem situations.

Research indicates that when teens have problems, they tend to

seek help first from their friends. Natural Helpers are identified through an anonymous survey distributed throughout selected grades in each participating school to identify peer helpers. Once students are identified as "helpers" by their peers, they are asked to participate in the Natural Helpers program.

The Natural Helpers program consists of an initial training retreat, a follow up training session during the year, and ongoing support from the school-based advisor. At the initial two-day training retreat, helpers are taught skills to use with their friends. Students learn how to: take care of themselves, work as a team, know when friends need help, express

care and concern, express limits, recognize situations which require adult help, and make referrals for other help. Additional skills are taught at the on-going training sessions.

During the 2005-2006 school year, four schools in Morrow County participated in Natural Helpers. 45 new Natural Helpers from the schools completed the retreat training.



Natural Helpers: Peers helping peers

During the 2005-2006 school year, the helpers reported helping their peers with 315 problems. The most commonly reported problems encountered focused on academic pressures and relationships with friends.

- Academic Pressures: 33
- Friend relationships: 33 problems

Other identified problems areas included:

- Sports-related: 31 problems
- Stress: 31 problems

- Depression: 30 problems
- Family Relationships: 30 problems

Serious or life threatening problems were identified by the helpers. These included:

- Depression (23),
- Alcohol and drug abuse (18),
- Physical abuse/ violence (10),
- Suicide (7), and
- Sexual abuse (9).

Though these problems were identified less frequently, the helpers are trained to deal with these issues at the retreat and to refer their peers to professionals and/ or trusted adults.

Morrow County Prevention 2006 Summary Report

Included in this report:

Helpers Report Improved Communication Skills. 2

Peer Helpers Reported Improved Helping Skills at the End of the Year. 2

54% of Helpers Reported Improved Decision Making Skills 2

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- The Natural Helpers reported helping their peers with 315 problems during the 2005-2006 school year.
- By the end of the school year, 84% of helpers demonstrated improved helping skills taught at the retreat.
- 64% of participants improved communication skills by the end of the school year.
- 54% of program participants improved decision making skills by the end of the school year.



Helpers Report Improved Communication Skills

When helping someone with a problem, good communication skills are essential. Participants in the Natural Helpers Program reported significantly improved communication skills at the end of the school year.

The Natural Helpers program focuses on the following commu-

nication skills:

- Words matching non-verbal cues.
- Speaking in a clear and specific way.
- Asking questions when something is unclear.
- Repeating what is said in

your own words to make sure you understood correctly.

64% of the participants reported improved skills at the end of the year.

Peer Helpers Reported Improved Helping Skills at the End of the Year

The primary emphasis in the 2 day training retreat is to provide youth with the skills to help their friends/peers when they are having problems. This includes learning how to: take care of themselves, work as a team, know when friends need help, express care and concern, express limits, recognize situations which require adult help, and make referrals for other help.

The helpers identified using helping skills that were taught at the retreat to help their peers.

70% of helpers reported improvements in asking friends about different options for solving problems. They recognized that a friend had a problem before talking with them 68% of the time.

84% of Natural Helpers reported improvement in their helping skills after participating in the program. 37 of the 45 participants who completed the assessment showed improvement in their helping skills.

54% of Helpers Reported Improved Decision Making Skills.

54% of the participants in the program improved decision making skills by the end of the school year. Key steps in the decision making process improved including:

- Gathering all the information that is needed

before making a decision.

- Thinking about the consequences of each choice before making a decision.
- Making the best choice based on all the information available then do it.

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Funded in part by:

Ohio Department of
Alcohol and Drug
Addiction Services



Morrow County Safe and Drug
Free Schools Consortium