

NWX-OS-OGC-RKVL

**Moderator: Tish Hall
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Coordinator: Thank you for standing by. At this time all participants are in a listen-only mode. After the presentation we'll conduct a question-and-answer session. To ask a question please press the star-1 and record your name. Today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections you may disconnect at this time.

And I would like to turn the call over to your host, Melissa Sellevaag. You may begin.

Melissa Sellevaag: Thank you, thanks very much. On behalf of the Offices of Adolescent Health and the Family and Youth Services Bureau I want to welcome everyone to the webinar, Rules of Engagement: Participant Recruitment and Retention.

My name is Melissa Sellevaag and I work for JBS International which has been providing the training and technical assistance for the TPP and (Prius) grantees.

Today we're going to - I'm going to be presenting the first portion of the webinar and then we've got some guests from Metro TeenAIDs who are going to be sharing their experiences.

Just a little bit of background on the three of us who are going to be speaking to you today, prior to joining JBS I worked as a clinical social worker in Washington D.C. and provided program development, training and technical assistance, as well as direct clinical services.

Joining me are (Angel) and (Michelle) and they both are from Metro TeenAIDs which is a community-based organization in Washington D.C. that provides school and community-based services for youth. And we'll share a little bit more on Metro TeenAIDs later on.

(Michelle) is a licensed clinical social worker who is currently their director of clinical services. She's provided clinical services and program development on both a national and international capacity.

(Angel) is currently the Director of community outreach and partnerships and has worked in advocacy and program development at a local and national level. And I am absolutely thrilled that they're both able to join us today.

So to start off with, what I hope you'll achieve by the end of this webinar is to be able to identify the components of a recruitment and retention strategy, to be able to identify three strategies for recruiting new participants as well as three strategies for retaining participants, and finally to summarize how to incorporate positive youth development into a recruitment and retention strategy.

So to start us off I want to set the stage a little bit. Research on participant recruitment and retention has tended to be heavily focused on out of school time programs.

I think if we did an informal poll of folks who are the phone we'd find that many have developed their strategies based on best knowledge and individual experiences and not necessarily on research and best practices. A lot of trial and error has gone into figuring out how to successfully recruit youth for programs.

What works for one agency won't necessarily work for another agency. Several factors can influence the creation of a recruitment and retention strategy.

And strategies identified for a program working with Latino youth in the south won't necessarily work with African American youth living in an urban setting. There are factors specific to a population that need to be considered and the location of a setting can significantly influence that strategy.

Is it being implemented in a rural setting, an urban setting, a suburban setting, a school, a community-based organization, clinic, residential home, the list goes on and on? And these factors really need to be considered.

Additionally, the reputation of the agency implementing the program can influence the strategy. An agency that's well known in the community may not have to work as hard to identify and recruit youth as a newer agency.

And if that program being implemented changes the direction for that - that direction of programming for that agency than some special or targeted

marketing may be necessary to inform the community and the stakeholders about the new direction.

And finally, the culture of the population being served can influence the strategy. It's important to consider the language of your materials, how you plan to go about engaging parents and caregivers, how you frame the program among other things.

So what is a recruitment and retention strategy? Well, it's a written plan documenting what steps and actions you plan to take to recruit and retain youth. It's ideally created as a part of your implementation plan and is informed by the needs assessment.

It allows you to consider any factors that are specific to your identified population or neighborhood and could influence the recruitment and retention of youth. The strategy also identifies persons responsible for each step and this eliminates any confusion. The strategy is revisited throughout the life of the program and as we talk further you'll come to realize why that's so important.

This document is not a once and done document. It should be revisited, revised, and updated at least prior to the next implementation phase to incorporate any lessons you may have learned.

A strategy's important because it forces staff to sit down and consider how youth will be identified for - and recruited for the program and what steps will be taken to ensure that they stay engaged with the agency and the program for its entirety. It removes the thought or philosophy of build it and they will come.

I think too often recruitment is considered to be the easy part, that youth will be knocking down the door of our program. And this happens because we're excited about the program and the potential impact that it can and will have on youth. But that's because we've been living and breathing the creation and development of this program for quite some time.

The rest of the world isn't as closely and intimately involved in this program and its creation and therefore we can't expect them to share our same level of excitement. Believing that they will come can be a mistake that costs your agency valuable time along with money.

If you don't have a well thought out strategy and the initial attempt has failed then you have to stop implementation, regroup, and start from the beginning with recruiting youth all over. This can delay your implementation by months and result in an underutilized staff and resources and that impacts the overall program delivery.

Additionally, staff may think that the program itself will keep youth engaged. Again, our excitement is not a guarantee that others will react the same way. Now it's important to say that this excitement is a key element to effective program delivery and implementation. But it should not be assumed that others will feel this level of excitement and passion as quickly as we do.

In the slides to come we're going to discuss a lot of external factors and distractions that can cause you to disengage from the program.

So who writes these strategies? Our recruitment and retention strategy is a collaborative team effort. The creation of this strategy in a silo is really not going to benefit anybody. Each member of the team brings a different perspective that ensures that strategy is realistic.

We don't want managers or directors who are monitoring the program to create a plan that sounds great on paper but ends up being impossible or really difficult to implement.

Frontline staff may have really creative ideas for how to reach youth or their caregivers but they may not have access to budget information to determine if it's fiscally possible. Involving youth in the creation of the strategy if at all possible is invaluable. Youth can tell you if what you planned to do will actually reach their peers and be effective.

They can help identify locations for outreach, screen marketing materials, or help develop them to determine their appeal. They can help craft language that will reach their peers and even help distribute information. And we're going to talk a little bit more about that in a little bit.

At a minimum, an informal focus group or conversation with youth to determine if you're on target should be held. Programs that I've worked with have either held informal focus groups or even held formal focus groups to assess materials and program ideas. Again, you want your excitement to translate to the youth because that's really going to help get them in the door.

So let's talk a little bit about some of the factors that influence the creation of this strategy. Starting with potential barriers, and these are barriers to both recruitment and retention.

The barriers listed on your screen were identified in research from the Harvard Family Research Project which focuses mostly on out of school time, a focus group of youth in Washington, D.C. that was held by Child Trends, and individual experience.

And I'm sure that you've encountered barriers that have not been identified on this list and are specific to your population or geographic area.

First we're going to talk about meeting the basic needs. This barrier relates back to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. While I'm sure that most of you are familiar with Maslow and his hierarchy I just want to summarize real briefly so we're all on the same page.

But basically a person can't reach their most self aware or self actualized if their previous needs aren't met. And if you remember, that bottom tier relates to basic needs such as safety and shelter.

So if a youth shows up hungry, feels unsafe, doesn't have a safe home to go home to, then they really can't be expected to focus on your program. So before you can help the youth and expect the youth to stay engaged with the program or expect a parent or caregiver to commit to getting their child to that program and holding that child accountable, that youth accountable for attending the program we need to make sure that some basic needs are met.

Some of these needs can be met just by providing snacks or ensuring that your program is held in a safe environment. Other needs may require a referral and a robust referral network can ensure that the youth get their needs met and stay focused on your program.

We're going to talk more about referrals in a bit but I want to say that it's important to remember that your agency isn't required to provide everything for that youth but connecting them to other reputable agencies or persons that can help meet their needs can be the difference in whether they attend or drop out of the program.

Looking at similar or competing programs, are there other programs in your area that are perceived as more interesting or easier to get? Doing a simple environmental scan will inform you as to what programs exist in the area, how popular they are, and if you can collaborate at all. Talking to youth is another way to determine if there's competition out there.

Ponder, is there a way for you to collaborate with those programs and how can you ensure that your program is unique enough to draw the youth in. Neighborhood rivalries are a huge issue in Washington, D.C. We really can't draw on youths from different sections of the city because they often don't get along and it becomes a safety issue.

So you need to be aware of what rivalries are present and what you're going to do to ensure the safety of participants and staff. While youths can often and do behave really well inside the program and are safe in there, what happens when they walk out of the doors to go home? Here in D.C. we've had to talk with police and ensure a police presence at time to make sure that youth can get to the public transportation without an issue.

We've also separated out programming to ensure that different neighborhoods attended different times so they don't mix at the event. Are there other rivalries that exist within a school or an area that may influence attendance at your program?

Transportation is a fairly obvious one. If they can't get there they're not going to come. And this can be a big issue for more rural programs where public transportation may be of concern. If you're providing transportation it's important to consider, does your van have your logo plastered all over it?

While that can be great for advertising it may jeopardize confidentiality and privacy. In an urban setting can you provide fare cards or bus tokens for public transportation? Are you located near public transportation or a short walk from school?

And if you're located a school but are holding the program after school does that mean that the youth will miss their bus home? Is there an activities bus that runs later that they can get on? Or can you negotiate that with the school?

Considering the stakeholder buy-in it's important to consider who your stakeholders are. And you probably did that when you did your needs assessment. But have you spent time engaging with them more than just when you did that needs assessments. Do they really understand the program and the value to the youth?

If parents, guardians, teachers, coaches, pastors or neighbors don't know about the value then they can't help hold that youth accountable for showing up.

Stigma, if we think about stigma as it relates to youth and their perception do they think that they don't need the program? Do they not want to be seen as "uncool"? Do they not want people to think that they're having sex?

So do they not want people to think that they're having sex if they go to an agency that focuses on reproductive health? And then visa versa, are they concerned that people will think that they are having sex if they go to this program?

If there - if the program's housed within an AIDS service organization will people think that they have HIV if they show up? Stigma of parents is also

something that we need to consider, that thought of my kid doesn't need this program because they're "the good kid".

What can you do to educate stakeholders and the community around the program and help address this stigma? And it could be different for different groups of youth and it could be different for different groups of caregivers and parents. So it may take a multi-pronged approach.

Family responsibilities, this is important to consider as it could be a huge barriers for youths not being able to come. Do they work after school or on weekends?

Do they work because they have to contribute to the household income? Or do they work because they want to work, they want to put it on their resume or on future job applications or college applications?

Are they taking care of their younger siblings while their parent or caregiver works? Or are they caring for a sick parents or caregiver and they need to go home immediately after school and make sure that that person is tended to?

Additionally, it's important to consider the culture of the community that you're working in and how that can influence family responsibility and how that may impact program attendance.

And finally, boredom. This came directly from the youth that were in the focus group held by Child Trends. Do the youth think that they'll be bored? Or do they get bored once the program starts? That can impact recruitment and retention.

Studies show and, of course, I don't think any of us needed a study to tell us this but the youth like programs where they can just go and hang out.

How can you address that but still keep youth engaged while implementing with fidelity?

So those are some of the potential barriers. Now let's talk about a voluntary versus involuntary participants and this can impact your strategy for recruitment and retention. So a voluntary participant is one that shows up on their own volition. They want to be there. They choose to attend.

An involuntary participant can take on many forms with the most obvious example being when a youth is forced to attend, the juvenile justice system, a parent, a case manager, a social worker, or another adult can require that youth to attend the program to fulfill some requirement of another program or a stipulation such as to stay in a group house, to stay out of jail, to be rewarded in some other fashion.

Some youth, however, may not have a choice but to attend. For instance, if you're implementing in a school those youth may not have a choice if - to attend your class or not. They may be in your class regardless of their motivation. So I would actually classify those kids as involuntary as well.

When working with involuntary participants it's important to remember that while they may be present they may be physically sitting in that classroom or at your program they may not be engaged. So to get them engaged and reap the benefit of the program may require additional effort and creativity than it would with a voluntary participant.

And I think it's important that you at least acknowledge that they're not there because they want to be. We can't fool youths and we certainly don't want to fool ourselves. And I think (Angel) and (Michelle) will talk a little bit about that in a little while.

So next thing that can impact and influence your recruitment and retention strategy is the implementation round. So what round of implementation are you currently recruiting or trying to retain participants for? And this can impact the willingness of the participants as well as the energy and the creativity of our staff.

With a voluntary program you could have had a group of youth who were super eager to get involved. They were motivated, engaged, and willing to participate in every aspect of your program. They were literally knocking down the door to get in. It required minimal effort or planning to recruit them. And you certainly didn't have to work that hard to retain them in the program.

During subsequent rounds or the latter half of a first round for programs that might be longer in duration, not the six or eight weeks but some of the programs are, the pool of eager or willing youth may be smaller. You may have a group of youth who mirror an involuntary group rather than that eager voluntary group you started with.

Or you could just have a much smaller pool of youth to select from and need to expand your recruitment efforts and work on your retention. It's important to remember that what works during the first round may not work in subsequent rounds, which is why I said that that strategy is a living document that needs to be updated regularly.

So how can agency specific issues impact the creation of a recruitment and retention strategy? Mentioned a little bit earlier that the visibility of the agency is important to consider because this can impact the level and detail of marketing, the type of marketing, and your referral networks that are available.

For an agency that's highly visible with a good reputation youth may want to attend based on their previous or their friend's previous experiences with that agency. And other agencies may refer based on their prior experiences with your agency.

For an agency that's new or has just branched out into a new program area this may require a different type of strategy and some additional effort. The community won't know that you're good at this and that the program or agency is even an option for their youth. And that intrinsic trust with that agency won't be there.

Considering your referral network, is it as expansive and robust as it can be? Can you just pick up the phone or shoot off a few emails and let folks know that you're starting a new program? Or do you have to set up meetings and brownbag lunches to inform the community about this new program?

Can the places that you refer youth to for other services become a referral source for you? Have you identified referral sources for those needs that can arise and prevent youth from staying engaged in your programming? Having a robust referral network is a two-ways street.

In most cases you don't have to be everything to the community, there's plenty of people out there.

Now in a few instances, maybe in a more rural or isolated situation, you may be the only shop in town and if that's the case you may have great visibility in the community and can use that your advantage.

So agency reputation often times can bring people through the door. (Michelle) and (Angel) are going to talk about how they're used the reputation of Metro TeenAIDs to recruit and retain youth in a little bit. One thing to consider is that being known for certain things can end up pigeon holing you into one type of program.

So if you're known for doing work around HIV prevention or working with incarcerated youth and now you're branching off into a new area that may take some extra effort to inform the community of this new venture.

Marketing and branding, do people know who you are just by looking at your logo? Do they know your program? Do they know your program just by looking at the swag and the materials that you may be carrying?

Again, (Angel) and (Michelle) are going to talk about some of the marketing and branding that they've been able to do and how this has helped with their programming. Basically kids want stuff and sometimes the more stuff that you have with your name on it the more they're going to wear and use it and then they're free walking advertisements.

When I worked in D.C. on an adolescent prevent project and we were going to - we were working to identify the swag or the stuff that kids got for participating, we were talking with youth and they decided on dog tags.

And I just thought this was the craziest idea and I was really skeptical about how many youth were going to want to wear these small colored dog tags hung around their neck.

I was completely wrong. These things flew out of our bags. Kids wore them everywhere. It was walking advertisement for our program and they wanted to get involved with our program just to obtain and to wear those dog tags. So that's how involving youth can sometimes open your eyes to what you thought was going to be cool actually isn't and what they thought was going to be cool actually is.

Considering human capital, how much staff time and labor do you have to help create and implement the strategy? Do you have volunteers, Americor members, student interns, or peer outreach workers that you can utilize to enact this strategy? And can they help you just with word of mouth?

And finally, in kind resources and partnerships. What resources can you identify that won't cost you money? Can you get your palm cards printed with simply putting out that person's business card in your agency? Can you get local merchants to put out those palm cards or flyers for free around the cash register? Kids love to pick up stuff that's sitting around the cash register.

Can you get a local pastor or organization to announce your organization during one of their services? Do you have a parent involved in a school that can help work with that school's officials to get your program known about at the school? And finally, are there teachers who want to be involved just because of their dedication to youth?

So staff can influence your strategy as well and this is key. While staff turnover is the nature of the beast when working in a social service program

obviously working to limit the frequency of the turnovers and limit the impact that these can have on youth can contribute to the success of the program and retention of participants.

Understanding the culture of your agency and the type of employee who will contribute to the success of the program is key when you're hiring staff. Now most of you have probably already hired staff but you may have to go through a second round coming up as you've had staff attrition or have realized maybe it wasn't a great fit.

So you obviously want somebody who believes in the mission of your organization, is energetic, and is dedicated. Some agencies feel it's important to hire young staff who can better relate to the youth.

Others have found that having a diverse age range of employees is effective. And yet others have found that hiring older and more experienced staff, the youth end up having a trusted adult figure that they can turn to. It really depends on your agency and the youth that you're working with.

Respect is a vital component of any workplace environment. The focus group that was held with youth in D.C. identified that feeling respected and being treated with respect was an important factor in retaining them in programming.

That can mean involving youth in program development, ensuring they have a voice in the program and addressing issues or problems directly and respectfully with youth. Obviously modeling respectful behavior is important.

While this seems obvious I have seen and heard far too many youth workers talking in a disrespectful way to youth to leave it unsaid.

Cultural awareness is another important component to consider. Our regional trainings in November addressed aspects of cultural awareness. So ensuring that your staff are culturally aware will help you keep youth involved and parents engaged.

This can involve ongoing training, ensuring that waiting rooms, program sites, paperwork, and materials are culturally inclusive. Sometimes simple things can make all the difference.

And finally, having staff reflect the community and this is often misinterpreted. People often think that this means just having staff with the same race or ethnicity as your participants.

While it can include this it can also include hiring staff who are aware of the local vernacular that's used by youth or have similar experiences as the youth. For instance, they may know what it was like to be raised in a rural area or in an urban area.

When I was working in D.C. I had to get a lesson on the language and the terms used by youth. I didn't go in pretending that I knew what the language was and what the terms that the youth used. But I knew I had to learn what they were saying.

By not pretending to be hip when I went in I think it actually provided a level of authenticity and then we could turn around and ensure that our team was well versed on what the vernacular of the community was.

So we've just discussed a bunch of factors that can impact your participant recruitment and retention strategy. And now we're going to talk briefly about

some promising ideas. And then I'm going to turn it over to (Michelle) and (Angel) so that they can talk about their specific experiences.

We talked about youth participation and how important it is. So studies have found that obviously the adolescents are influenced by their peers and so incorporating them into the program process is a natural step.

Can the youth create materials? Can they distribute materials? Can they go and talk to a group of possible participants? Can they write a blog to share their story? Ponder how else youth can be involved in this process.

Marketing, I am sure that (unintelligible) is going to talk about this in a few minutes but it really doesn't have to break the bank to market your program. You can use social media, human capital, palm cards which are cheap to print, and other creative messages to ensure the community is aware of your program without costing a lot of money.

Is there an event that's already being planned or happening in your community and can you set up a table there for free and get youth to sign up? Can you send youth to distribute flyers there?

Leadership opportunities, this can be huge in retaining youth offering youth involved in your program the opportunity for leadership can really work to retain them. Many youth are attracted to leadership opportunities. They recognize the value for college applications, resumes, and life experience. And some just like to be in a position to be heard and exercise their voice.

You can have - you can provide this as an incentive. They don't have to be directly linked to the program they're participating in but they can help develop other programs, they can mentor younger youth in a program at your

agency, they can work with agency leaders on projects, they can be involved in future program planning and implementation, they can help update the recruitment and retention strategy, or even become trained as peer leaders.

The opportunities and possibilities are endless. And obviously strategic hiring of staff which we just spoke about, but that can be key to preventing turnover.

Involving parents and caregivers, this is a double-edged sword. Some programs like to involve youth - or parents and caregivers on the front and some youth are concerned about attending programs where their parents and caregivers might be involved.

But ensuring that the parents and caregivers are supportive of the program, they know about the program, they see the value in the program, they're more likely to remove those barriers that will prevent the youth from showing up.

So if they have to arrange for alternative childcare so that youth doesn't have to watch siblings they're more likely to do that if they understand the value that this program will show for their older youth.

We talked about the provision of basic needs, can you provide snacks? Can you link parents and caregivers to medical services, employment services, housing, childcare, anything else that may help them meet those basic needs and remove the potential barriers from their youth attending?

Person to person follow up, social media and texting are great ways to communicate with youth in a modality where they are most comfortable but there really is nothing like picking up a phone or knocking on a door for face to face communication. This lets the youth know that they're valued, that they're important, and you took the time to personally reach out to them.

If a youth shows up once and doesn't come back pick up the phone, go visit them, go reach out to them, show them that you actually care about them, that can go huge - can make huge difference in them attending the program.

Accurately portray the program, so if you advertise that your program is a teen drop in center and youth can come and hang out but you actually have two hours of structured programming don't tell them they can just come and hang out.

Let youth know what they're going to get involved with when they get there so they're not taken by surprise, that's going to help them not feel tricked and that's going to help them have trust in you and trust in the program.

And finally, creative use of incentives, so sometimes this can cost money, sometimes it doesn't have to cost money. And (Michelle) and (Angel) can talk about what they've done. But you don't have to give away things to each person who walks in the door. You can use raffles for big ticket items.

You can provide incentives for finishing certain amounts of the program. You can use non-monetary incentives such as tickets or concert - tickets to movies and concert tickets, leadership opportunities, community service hours.

Every youth that goes to a D.C. public high school is required to get community service hours. So providing those is a nice way to incentivize and have the youth come in.

So I want to bring (Angel) and (Michelle) in now and have them talk a little bit - very briefly about who Metro TeenAIDs is just to set the context so you know where they're coming from and how it relates to the programs that

you're implementing in your specific agencies. And then they're going to talk about what has worked for recruitment and what has worked for retention. So (Angel) and (Michelle)?

(Michelle): Hi, thanks, Melissa. This is (Michelle) and I am going to just quickly sort of set the stage for you. Metro TeenAIDs is as you can see a community-based organization. We've got over 20 years experience working in the area of HIV education and prevention specifically for youth. Our target age range is folks who are 13 to 24.

As we have sort of gotten deeper and deeper into understanding the needs of youth specifically as it relates to HIV we have expanded to really be more of a provider of education and prevention around all sexual and reproductive health.

We implement as you can see making proud choices and also BART, becoming a responsible teen in schools. We are very much led by our youth. They are heavily, heavily, heavily involved in pretty much every aspect of the programming that happens here at Metro TeenAIDs. We are big fans of focus group.

And as you can see on that slide we have a really robust and frankly remarkable social marketing campaign. Our social marketing campaign is called Real Talk 61827 and if a youth is wondering, for instance, if they're in the city in D.C.

And they're wondering where they can get condoms, they can text Real Talk 61827 and a list of agencies who distribute free condoms near where they are will come up for them.

We have been on the sides of Metro buses and at Metro stations and all of the young people who are represented on our Real Talk 61827 posters and bus signs are our actual peers.

So they are, you know, people who come to MTA who use our services and who actually are also employed by us. (Angel) will talk more about sort of what that looks like. But we also employ a significant number of young people to help us spread the word around HIV, STI, and pregnancy prevention.

So I'm going to actually now hand this over to (Angel) who's going to talk a little bit more about how we recruit our young people because we are a voluntary organization. We cannot have any involuntary young people coming to our organization.

(Angel): Thanks, so we see young people in many different ways here at Metro TeenAIDs. We have a youth drop in center called Freestyle. We also as you all - as has been mentioned earlier on slides, we go directly to young people through our public and charter schools. And we also conduct street and community outreach to education.

So - and then the last point that we see young people coming to us is for HIV, STI, pregnancy testing and counseling. So there's four primary ways in which young people are introduced to our organization. And the ways in which we are able to keep them coming back are through how we offer our programs and services.

And as you can see there on the slide, we value - we have culturally informed staff. As an organization there are over 50 - or approximately 50 full time

adults there and of those 50 adult staff about 20% of them are over the age of 30.

So our staff, first of all, is a very youthful staff. And so 80% of us are between the ages of 18 and 29. And for young people to see staff that looks like them that are of the community I think it's definitely an asset to our organization and what keeps the young people coming back.

Additionally, as an organization we ensure that every fulltime adult staff person is trained in an intensive advanced youth development training thus they're able to meet the needs of the young people and they're able to address and work with youth in a fully partnered relationship versus an adult service provider and a recipient of services.

Another thing that we do which is really unique here, speaks to the second point of involving young people, we hire youth clients on as fulltime staff persons. We have peer advocators but we also have service members, national service members, Americor members, city (unintelligible) members, public allies, and some volunteers.

And so it doesn't matter your mode of entry into our organization, whether you're a client, a peer educator, a volunteer, there are always opportunities for you to be thoroughly involved and from those opportunities of involvement to also potentially maybe one day become a part of the fulltime staff.

Where we're working with our peer educators is there are approximately 45 of them currently active on staff at this moment, the way that we maintain them - of course, they get paid.

They get paid \$8.25 an hour but there are five staff people that are committed to these five separate teams of peer educators and together these five staff members work to coordinate regular monthly trainings which we call booster sessions where the young people are able to advance in their knowledge and skills.

We are also able to provide for them other opportunities of growth and development. They're trained - some of them are trained to test for HIV. Others get training on STI testing and some of them like to just volunteer, shadow other adult staff.

The other thing that - this asset of our peer educators, by having them involved, is they become the space of our organization. So other youths around the city, their introduction to Metro TeenAIDs is not from an adult staff person but more than half of the time their first introduction to MTA is with a young person who's a representative for us out in the community.

And we've mentioned earlier the value of having involved community partners. We have over 45 active community network partners that we collaborate with on events, on education sessions, activities for young people, for referral services.

And this partnership or these partnerships allows for great visibility in the community. So young people see us in the streets, they see us in the schools, and they also see us at other organizations and partnering for other activities.

(Michelle): All right, so I'm going to talk about sort of how we retain young people. We talked a little bit about how young people come to find out about us and one of the things that I want to sort of hearken back to what Melissa said, that

whole if we build it they will come, we actually have an opposite approach. It's if we build it we will go to you.

So it's specifically for our HIV positive young people who we're working with. They're, you know, often times their lives are complicated and it becomes very difficult for them to come to us.

So the expectation that's actually that the adult staff who are working with our positive young people are actually meeting those young people where they are, in the community, at home, wherever it is that that young person is most comfortable.

(Angel) talked about a robust referral system and that is - we could actually not do our jobs without our community partners. And yes, it's sometimes challenging but we really do partner with a lot of our community agencies. And one of the things that I have found really helpful is not just knowing, you know, where to send a young person but actually having a contact there and having space in the place that you're sending the kids.

Because the fastest way to lose credibility with a young person is to send them to an organization that either won't meet their needs, can't meet their needs, or treats them in a way that makes them feel less than. We often are working with young people who don't have their basic needs met.

We have some young people who come to see us who are homeless, who are hungry. One of the things we do is we ensure that we're at least getting some of those needs met. So for our homeless youth we are helping link them to shelters or transitional housing.

We also offer food every single day at Metro TeenAIDs and that's actually donated from a community partner here in D.C. called D.C. Central Kitchen. We understand that we cannot really make inroads with young people if they're hungry, if they're worried about where they're going to lay their head tonight.

We also find that it sort of helps get them to come back and back and back. The food may not be great but it's food and if they're hungry they come.

(Angel): In other ways - I mentioned earlier that every staff person here is trained in advanced youth development and that advanced youth development is served as a foundation for our organizational value of respecting youth and working as collaborative partners with young people with everything that we do.

Young people help inform our program designs, they help us think through our strategies for street outreach and education, they identify the neighborhoods in which we need to be in, where we should do the work, what types of events we should have. They actually work in partnership with their supervisors to design programs and events and actually are the individuals that implement those actual activities.

We also use a lot of the (unintelligible) on the previous slide, there was a palm card mockup for (unintelligible) concert tickets that we distributed last year in our World AIDS Day event.

We - sometimes we have the resources to be able to give really big incentives, concert tickets, iPads, Xboxes, huge electronics. And then other times the incentives may be clothes, sweatshirts, t-shirts. We - we're able sometimes to give personal hygiene products and care baskets.

And we also give young people stuff that they say they want. A gift card may not work for a lot of youth but a personal hygiene basket may be a priority for someone. So with each different program service provision that we offer we're constantly asking what types of tools work for you in terms of incentives.

Sometimes when we give out American Express gift cards in certain communities they can't use them because those vendors don't use American Express because it costs the vendor.

So we have to adjust and give out a different type of gift card but we would never know that if we didn't allow the opportunities for the youth to inform the types of incentives we give.

We also offer opportunities for them to get out of their neighborhoods. We take them ice-skating. We take them bowling. Some youth are doing activities that they'd never done before, wouldn't normally do at home.

And then last thing, ways that I mentioned before, the young people that come to MTA to receive services whether they are coming because they are positive clients and they're on our care advocacy roster or they're just accessing services in our Freestyle youth center, there's always an opportunity for them to advance, to grow, and maybe even join the teen as a staff person to give back to their community.

Melissa Sellevaag: (Michelle) and (Angel), can you guys talk a little bit about when you are working in the schools and how you have worked to keep the youth, which you've done an amazing job, engaged for the length of BART and making proud choices?

(Michelle): Sure, we have a very large school team that is comprised of both paid staff and public allies. Our schools team, just like the rest of our staff, really do try and ensure that they reflect the youth that are being served at D.C. public schools and some of our charter schools.

We talk to the youth and Melissa spoke about respect, and that is probably the primary way that we help keep young people engaged. They really respond to respect and if they feel respected they in turn often give respect. The other thing - you know, it's very sort of typical facilitate - like facilitation 101. We make sure that they're engaged.

If something needs to be read to somebody we ask somebody to read aloud. We don't stand up and lecture. We try and do activities. We try and get young people up and moving so that - you know, especially after lunch. If they're tired and sleepy they are going to fall asleep. So we try and get them to - get up and start moving around.

It's a very sort of interactive and creative process that our schools team uses to make sure that young people stay engaged and are, you know, interested. They do actually sort of explicitly say to young people, look you all, this is important information, this is information that's going to keep you healthy.

So I think that it's sort of a combination of sort of a dynamic leadership or education - or not system, we do not have a dynamic education system but a dynamic facilitation as well as sort of understanding, helping the young people understand the importance of the information that they're getting.

Melissa Sellevaag: Awesome, and how has youth introducing the Metro TeenAIDs programming or even the work you've done on BART and making proud

choices in the school impacted your recruitment and retention of youth at Metro TeenAIDs?

(Angel): Yes, in general I think one of the greatest powers of MPC and BART is that that's where we first get to see a lot of the young people.

And once they establish these relationships with the facilitators that are there for eight to ten weeks per class for each group then they have a relationship that's been established and those young people want to then come to us when we're no longer able to be with them in the school because we've moved on to another class, another group.

And that's when we make the connection, we serviced you here in the schools and then you can come and meet us here at our youth center. And then a lot of young people then come to us for continued service. And a lot of times it's just to come and have fun and hang out.

And when they have a really great experience in the school the reputation that we're able to create definitely follows us throughout the city. So young people know wherever we go when we see MTA we know that those are people that are going to give us the service that we want and that are also going to understand how we need the program and service delivered.

Melissa Sellevaag: So that trust is built there.

(Angel): Absolutely, absolutely. And the peer educators that we have also, again, really create that bridge in ways that a lot of our adult staff may have to do a little bit harder work because the youth trust each other first.

Melissa Sellevaag: Awesome, I want to - it's about eight minutes to three and so I want to open it up for folks to ask you guys questions if that's okay.

(Michelle): Sure.

Melissa Sellevaag: So if the operator can...

Coordinator: Okay, all right, thank you. And at this time we are ready to begin the question-and-answer session. If you would like to ask a question please press the star-1 and record your name. To withdraw your question please press the star-2. Once again, press star-1 if you have a question. One moment.

Melissa Sellevaag: While we're waiting for questions to come in, takes them a minute to queue them up, I think it's interesting and I know I've seen it in my work in the D.C. schools when you guys have been there is the youth - and I think this can work for a lot of our grantees on the phone, is that youth have that opportunity.

So the youth don't necessarily have a choice whether they attend that class but how it's managed in that class with your workers then translates into the next group to actually being excited to join making proud choices or BART in the school. And they almost wear the t-shirts or, you know, whatever they get at the end as kind of like a badge of honor.

So I think that does speak to the work that you've done with your - the training. And (Angel), you talked about that, the booster sessions and the sessions for your staff on how to work with young people.

(Angel): Absolutely, and we also offer capacity building trainings for other providers in the city around best practices concerning adolescent sexual and reproductive

health. So we train on everything from development of peer education program model to how to talk to youth about sex.

So we have, you know, as an organization education is a top priority for us, not only for the youth in the community but also for parents and other providers around the city to be able to offer top quality services.

Coordinator: We do have a question from (Tessa Matthews).

(Tessa Matthews): Hello, how are you all?

(Michelle): Hello.

(Angel): Hello.

(Tessa Matthews): That's good. I really enjoyed the webinar today but I was not able to connect via the Internet. Is there anyway I can get those slides emailed to me?

Melissa Sellevaag: Yes, they will be sent out within the next two weeks.

(Tessa Matthews): Okay, thank you.

Melissa Sellevaag: Sure, sure. (Angel) and (Michelle), we have a question - (Joy Davis) posted it on the web that says, what are some strategies to help parents get more involved and to attend parent meetings? Do you guys have thoughts on how you've engaged parents and caregivers before I give my two centers?

(Michelle): Sure, you know, I have to say that this is an area - (Angel)'s going to speak a little bit about our Parents Matter component but I have to say this is an area that MTA could grow in.

There are opportunities for us to work with parents and caregivers in a way that we have not yet done. So I do think - I think that that's an important piece especially. Young people live in systems, they live in family systems, and sort of we're looking to sort of meet the needs we've got to really look at the system.

And so to be perfectly honest, we have a little bit of a piece of it and (Angel)'s going to talk about that but it's certainly something that we - I think we can really develop.

(Angel): Yes, so we implement a curriculum called Parents Matter and it's a parent education and peer education program for adults. So that it's a three-part series where parents come and learn skills or strategies around how to talk to their children and children that are in their care about their sexual reproductive health.

And then the last part of this series teaches parents how to talk to other parents from a peer leadership perspective, passing on the information about the skills that they've learned in terms of talking to adolescents about their sexual and reproductive health.

And we have a really small group of parents that complete the Parents Matter every year. I don't think we break 50 parents a year for that initiative.

Melissa Sellevaag: And that's a great evidence-based program that's being used. And some other - separate and apart from implementing it and evidenced-program around engaging parents, which is great because then the parents become the parent to parent peer to peer workers is you can remove some of the barriers to getting them to attend the parent meetings.

Can you provide childcare? Can you provide transportation? I mean some of this is common sense and I'm sure you've already thought about can you provide an incentive for them to show up? Can you send the youth home to engage with that parent around what they're doing?

I've heard some folks who are implementing through the TPP program actually say that they offer a sports program for the young people and then they meet with the parents while the young people are engaging in an actual activity.

(Michelle): Melissa, I also just wanted to add it's important that we are always trying to go to their neighborhoods. We try and partner with recreation centers for instance to host Parents Matter so that it makes it easier for parents. And they're going somewhere that they're familiar with.

We're actually going to implement Parents Matter at an HIV positive housing organization I guess, it's in an apartment building, and we're going to go to them. So it just makes - again, it's about breaking down those barriers. Making it as easy as possible.

Melissa Sellevaag: Right, right. Here's another question from (Jennifer Baker) who said what strategies do you use in solidifying professionalism and boundaries with your peer and young staff and adults when it comes to knowing your participants and establishing relationships? So...

(Michelle): That is a great question.

(Angel): You want me to talk to that?

(Michelle): Yes.

(Angel): So as a part of our initial orientation and on boarding of all staff of course we go through the staff policies and procedures. We have an adult - a youth adult interaction policy that outlines what is acceptable and what's expected of all adult staff that work here.

We also have a code of conduct that our peer educators commit to and that speaks to, of course, what's expected of them as they sign on to be a peer educator. And what we do with the adult staff and with our youth staff is have what are regular professional development training opportunities.

We host them in house every other month at our regular staff meetings. And they touch on an array of topics, professionalism and cultural competency and creating safe spaces are some of the ones.

We also have these same type of education sessions designed specifically for our peer educators that happen on a monthly basis. And those are what we call booster sessions. And then we have larger sessions that take place quarterly.

And each peer education teen is also - the supervisors of those teams are tasked with serving as a mentor in grooming and developing those young people. And for topics that we're not experts on like job readiness and professionalism, and things that we don't have the capacity for we bring in guest speakers to facilitate those sessions.

It's always a fine line to walk, recruiting from our client base for staff often times can serve as a challenge as well because sometimes, you know, people just don't have that professional experience. So we're committed to building capacity every step of the way.

Melissa Sellevaag: Right, right. It's 3 o'clock but I've got two more questions that came across the web. Are there more questions on audio?

Coordinator: Yes, we have two questions on audio.

Melissa Sellevaag: Okay, (Angel) and (Michelle), do you guys mind if we take these four questions?

(Michelle): That's fine.

Melissa Sellevaag: Okay, let's take care of the two web ones and then we'll take care of the two audio ones if that's okay. What ideas do you have to make evidenced-based curriculums more interesting when you have to stick as closely to the curriculum as possible? I know you mentioned that kids sometimes get bored.

And before I pass it to them I do want to say that fidelity is super important as you guys all know. So maintaining your course with fidelity but that doesn't mean that your presenters can't be engaging and fun.

And I think (Michelle) and (Angel) spoke about that the folks who are implementing making proud choices and BART, A, are really well trained; B, they're dynamic, they're there because they want to be there, and making sure that the youth are engaged and the youth are involved while still maintaining fidelity to those two program models.

I think that sometimes who's presenting can make or break something. Anything else to add to that?

(Angel): Yes, I would agree with everything that you said. One of the things that we do is if we don't - if we're not doing any hardcore tailoring and adaptation of the intervention because we also offer a few other interventions, what - we tried a couple or complement the intervention with other activities.

For instance, if we implement the sister intervention and before we talk about relationship dynamics and safer sex we might play a recent movie that addresses unsafe sex and have a discussion one night in the youth center about it and then the next day begin - have the formal sister session.

So not necessarily tailoring or adapting the intervention as it is but having complementary program - activities that have nothing to do with the intervention per say but that complement there.

Also figuring out inventive ways to do activities, for instance, with MPC and BART we do condom demonstrations. Instead of just having a staff person do the demonstration we have the young people do a condom race. So have young people tell you what are some of the fun ways that you can teach the information.

Melissa Sellevaag: Right, right. And then the last web question is what do you present to the youth at the end of the program cycle? Do you have a graduation ceremony, present awards for perfect attendance, etc.? Are youth involved in planning this event?

(Angel): It depends, it differs by the intervention. We currently implement five different interventions at MTA so it all depends. And yes, the youth do inform what those celebrations are at the end of the program. But our sister interventions, specifically there's a graduation and a party.

For other programs there's an end of the summer party and big fieldtrips to celebratory opportunities for young people who have finished the programs.

Melissa Sellevaag: Awesome. All right, the audio questions.

Coordinator: All right, the first one is from (Tambra Chapman).

(Tambra Chapman): Hello.

Melissa Sellevaag: Hi.

(Tambra Chapman): Hi, I am with Mission, West Virginia and Hurricane, West Virginia and currently we are going into the middle schools, six, seven, and eight, and the high schools doing the TPP program. Earlier one of you had mentioned, you know, getting the parents involved and connections to the schools, get them to schools.

Would you recommend possibly PTA that gets involved with the middle schools talking to some parents with that program? Do you think that's something that would, you know, help us even further?

(Michelle): I think it depends on how active your PTA is. Our experience is that what works - the parents that we're trying to engage are actually those parents that you don't see at school that aren't necessarily active in the PTA.

So for instance, for our Parents Matter we actually hire a parent who lives in a neighborhood where we know that there is a high rate of HIV or a high prevalence of STIs or a high prevalence of unplanned pregnancy and that parent engages her core group.

And that sort of - that's how we're getting parents who don't necessarily want to or feel it's necessary or are able to sort of get involved in more sore of - I don't know, formal way with the schools.

Melissa Sellevaag: And I do think having the PTA as a stakeholder and have their buy-in is going to help you in the schools. Do you definitely want to do what (Michelle) said and reach outside the PTA for those other hard to reach parents who aren't engaged but having them buy into the program and support what you're doing is only going to help you work with your school officials and make sure that this - you know, stays...

(Tambra Chapman): (Unintelligible) out there. I have one other quick question, with regards to some of the things you talked about as far as incentives, we did - a lot of the areas that (unintelligible) past (unintelligible).

(Angel): You're actually breaking up.

(Tambra Chapman): (Unintelligible).

Melissa Sellevaag: We've lost you. Are you there? Hello? We've - if you type in your question - I can actually hear you. So if you type in your question and then I'll actually put up the email addresses for the three of us you can always email us as well but we've lost you on your cell phone connection.

(Tambra Chapman): Okay, thank you.

Coordinator: We have a question from (Caine Hubbard).

(Caine Hubbard): Yes, hello. My name is (Caine Hubbard). I'm with Southwest Louisiana, (AHECK), here in Lafayette. And my question is is that we do a lot of teen one-on-one recruiting pretty much.

What do teens want to hear when we are talking with them? Do they want to hear more about the program and how good we do? Or is it more about the incentives? What's the best strategy you all find for that?

(Angel): I think the best people to ask that question would be the young people in Lafayette because they're the only ones that can tell you what are going to be the messages that work for them. The messaging that works for us here in D.C. is very - it's going to be very different from what I'm sure will work for you and your young people in your community.

So one of the first things I would say is maybe you convene a group of young people and have a focus group with them about the type of information and messages that would work for them.

(Caine Hubbard): Okay, thank you.

(Angel): You're welcome.

Coordinator: Great, there are no other questions.

Melissa Sellevaag: Great, all right. Well, I want to thank (Michelle) and (Angel) for sharing your experiences and a little bit about what Metro TeenAIDs is doing here in D.C. The email contacts are up there so I'm sure they are happy to respond to any questions that you may have for them as you ponder this later in the day and overnight.

We thank you all for joining us. As I said, the slides will be sent out electronically within the next two weeks and then will be posted to the OAH website.

Hopefully you've gotten some new ideas or validated what you're already doing to recruit and retain the youths in your programs. We know you are doing incredibly important work out there and thank you for impacting the youth in such a positive way across the country.

So enjoy the rest of your Thursday and take good care.

Coordinator: All right, thank you. This completes today's conference. You may disconnect at this time.

Coordinator: Thank you.

END